BING

Winter
2015

No. 171

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326
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Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

Holiday Greetings to all of my fellow ICC members and associates. Whenever December rolls around, an interesting phenomenon occurs that almost seems inevitable, given the passage of time and coming of newer generations. That Bing Crosby, the man synonymous with the song "White Christmas", is now equally synonymous with another Christmas carol performed as an unlikely duet on television.

The Little Drummer Boy / Peace on Earth.
With David Bowie.

Since he passed away less than five weeks after the song was filmed for his *Merrie Olde Christmas* TV special, and six weeks before the world at large would ever see the performance, Bing wasn't able to witness the public reaction to it. Yet, judging by his comments to the BBC's Pete Murray just four days after the duet took place, Bing himself recognized this was something special, and recognized its potential as a commercial recording:

> *I think we'll see a different kind of a David Bowie. He has no wild make-up or beard or anything. He's very clean cut. We sing a duet and he sings a solo, and I think he's going to be a real fine, a real great contribution to the show. He sounds great, great voice. We play a little dialogue scene and he reads lines very good. He could be a good actor, I would think. They might release it as a record. That'll open up a new field for me; if I could get hooked up with the David Bowie crowd, why it'd be a big help.*

It was to be five years before that "record" was ever released, as a 45 rpm single on the RCA label. It became an immediate hit, climbing to number 3 on the British pop charts. A "music video" of the performance from the 1977 TV show quickly surfaced on MTV and VH-1, further cementing its popularity, and further enhancing Bing's legacy. How wonderful that Bing was able to leave us with one final Christmas classic to remember him by. Despite the decades that passed since "White Christmas" was recorded, his voice, his style, his charisma, and his talent, remained undiminished, right up to the end. And the magic of the Christmas season, and Bing's close association to it, made this final gift to us all possible.

Greg Van Beek **tvanbeek@execpc.com**

We received the very sad news of the death of Ken Barnes in August and we have an appreciation of him later in this issue plus some reminiscences from Greg Van Beek of his interactions with Ken.

You should be receiving this issue in time for the celebrations of Frank Sinatra's centenary and it seemed appropriate for us to celebrate it too. The photo on this page shows the young Frank meeting Bing for the first time and our front and back covers show Frank with the idol of his youth. There is a thoughtful article "Why Frank not Bing?" and also Martin McQuade has a special report on an important tribute to "The Voice" later in this issue. In addition, there is news of one of the many new books about him in "Books 'n' Bing".

The final Leeds meeting took place on October 4 and Bob Halls has submitted a detailed report on what was a lovely heart-warming occasion. I do hope that UK members will be able to arrange get-togethers in their localities next year. I shall be delighted to help wherever possible.

This issue is packed with a wide variety of articles with hopefully something for everybody. Keith Parkinson looks at *King of Jazz*, Ken Crossland remembers Perry Como's tribute to Bing on the Kraft Music Hall and Howard Crosby shares memories of his Uncle Bing. Graham Pascoe updates us on Australian matters and Michael Feinstein has unearthed a mystery. There is a lot of activity to report in "Bing on the Box" but this is in marked contrast to "Keeping Track" as Richard Baker is having to scratch around for details of new releases. It is possible that Bing Crosby Enterprises will come up with some releases for the Christmas season and if need be we will enclose a separate insert giving details.

Gord Atkinson is missing from our contributors this time due to the serious illness of his wife, Elaine.

My apologies for the number of photos of me in this issue! It's just how it worked out.

I wish all members the compliments of the season and a happy and healthy 2016.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

It is a pleasure to commence my report by congratulating all involved with the 50th and final Leeds Dinner/Meeting. The attendance was above average and it was encouraging that members had travelled from Australia, Austria, The Netherlands, Ireland and the United States to join the regulars and the new attendees from the United Kingdom. Bob Halls will cover the day's events in full, but here, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Malcolm for his brilliant presentation, thank Bob for his patient recording of the events and thank all past and present who supported the annual Leeds Dinner/Meeting. Hopefully, another dedicated member will continue this well-loved annual tradition in the years to come.

Following my previous remarks about the state of the ICC finances, your club officers have concluded that it will be necessary to increase subscriptions for the first time since 2008 and the new rates for 2016 are shown on page 2.

Whilst increases in subscriptions are never welcome they are necessary if we are to maintain three issues of BING per year. Our income has gone down over time due to loss of members, postal costs have risen and most importantly, two of our very generous benefactors are no longer with us. We will continue to be dependent on extra contributions from our beneficent members but hopefully the new rates plus these additional sums will ensure that we face the coming year with a healthy balance sheet. I urge all members to be generous when renewing their membership.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members with a wish that they will derive much interest and enjoyment from their membership of the club.

UNITED STATES

Mike Martin (San Francisco, California)

UNITED KINGDOM

Neil Perks (Hollywood, Birmingham)

DONATIONS

As I keep saying, the ICC is very fortunate to have generous benefactors who consistently support the club with their financial contributions and we are delighted to acknowledge further very generous donations from -

BRAZIL

Renato Fallace

ALL THE MEMBERS AT THE LEEDS 50th Dinner/Meeting

- with special mentions for Jeremy Rose, Ken Shaw and Keith Richmond for their kind and exceptional contributions.

To all who give additional and generous gifts to the ICC we extend our sincere thanks.

DEATHS

Sadly, we have learned of the deaths of :-

Ken Barnes (Benfleet, Essex), **Robert E. Sharp** (Gants Hill, Essex). **Frank Keyes** (Chatham, Massachusetts), **Roger Hackett** (Yonkers, New York)

It is always a sorrowful duty to report the loss of any member but on this occasion it is truly sad to report the death of Ken Barnes, a consummate professional whose dedicated work within the recording industry will be sadly missed. Ken was very supportive of the ICC and we were always appreciative of his visits to Leeds and the fine and interesting stories he could tell about his

association with Bing and other great stars. There will be many tributes to Ken within this issue of the magazine but here I would like to extend to Anne, Ken's widow, our very sincere condolences on behalf of ICC members.

Our heartfelt sympathies go also to the relatives and friends of the others we have lost.

BING CROSBY ON CD

This is my usual reminder that the following attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Ireland and Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. Unfortunately, increased postage costs are having a noticeable impact on letters going to destinations outside the UK. Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS - Vols. 2, 4, 8, 9 and 10

BING CROSBY in the Hall - Rare Live Recordings from KMH 1937 – 1946

BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall - Rare Original Survivors

BING CROSBY sings for the ARMED FORCES RADIO SERVICE

THE ROAD TO HONG KONG - SAY ONE FOR ME

BING CROSBY ENTERTAINS - FOR WOODBURY SOAP

BING CROSBY - Kraft Music Hall 1935 - 1936

Until spring, my warmest greetings to all members.

Michael Crampton **mdcrampton@gmail.com**

Ken Barnes 1933-2015

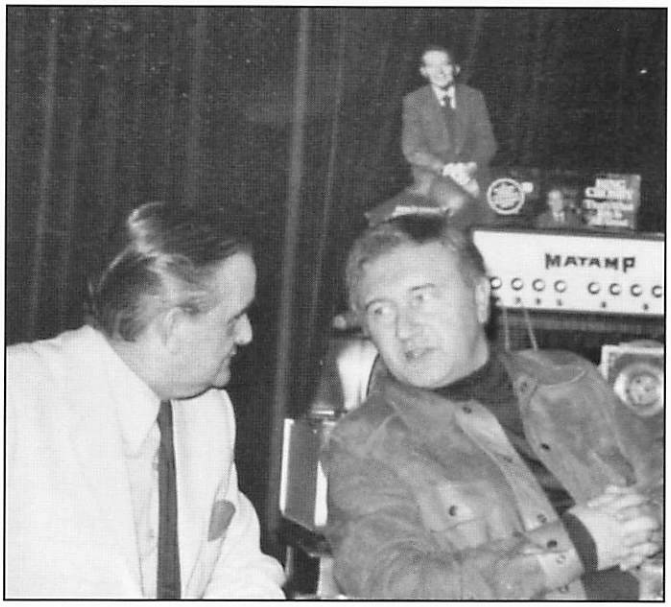
As Michael has said, we were all saddened to learn of the death of Ken Barnes on August 4 at the age of 82. A multi-talented man who was a writer, record producer, broadcaster, musicologist, film historian, film-maker and songwriter. Apart from his work with Bing and Fred Astaire, he worked with other stars such as Slim Whitman, Frankie Laine, Connie Francis, Jack Jones, Johnny Mercer and Peggy Lee, wrote sketches for Peter Sellers and Les Dawson and published several books, including *Sinatra and the Great Song Stylists* (1972) and, of course, *The Crosby Years* (1980).

Kenneth Valentine Barnes (he disliked his middle name and never used it) was born in Middlesbrough, Yorkshire on February 14 1933. He grew up in Redcar and after leaving school did National Service in the Royal Corps of Signals. Although he had originally trained as a draughtsman, hiss passion for music in the jazz, swing and Great American Songbook genres drew him to London in the 1960s. There he found a job with the record companies Polydor and Decca, initially working in marketing.

His feel for the music and ability to put artists at their ease meant that he soon began to find work in the production side of the business. Ken had a particular talent for working with major stars and could handle egos and peccadillos with ease. Patient and unyielding, he was able to bring out the best in them during recording sessions by subtly, but firmly, navigating any potential pitfalls.

His last studio recording was an album in aid of the charity "Help for Heroes". It was made in the music studio on the RAF Northolt air base with the Royal Air Force Squadronaires and Todd Gordon. Latterly Ken was writing the liner notes for a forthcoming album of Frank Sinatra's work. He was also the President of the British based Sinatra Music Society.

At the time of his death, he had just completed a project with Peggy Lee's granddaughter, Holly Foster-Wells, on a boxed CD/DVD set entitled, "Peggy Lee in London".



Ken with Reg Bristo at Leeds in 1975.

His involvement with Bing in 1974 led to six great albums over the next three years. After Bing's death, Ken produced the double LP "Songs of a Lifetime" (1979) and then "Come Share the Wine" (1980). These albums used 72 of the tracks originally done with Buddy Cole and were enhanced with orchestral backings from Pete Moore and His Orchestra. They were reissued as a 3-CD set as the "Tenth Anniversary Collection" in 1987. Over the years, Ken was involved in many other Crosby projects and he had great success with the "Swingin' with Bing! - Bing Crosby's Lost Radio Performances" 3-CD set in 2004. The CDs "Bing Crosby Meets Al Jolson", and "Some Fine Old Chestnuts / New Tricks" plus a special DVD collection built around *Holiday Inn* were also amongst his productions. Ken played a full part in the Hofstra conference in 2002 and the Gonzaga celebration in 2003 too.

Always willing to help Crosby fans, Ken first attended our Leeds gathering in 1975 and he returned on many occasions after that including our meeting last year when he captivated those present with his account of working with Bing and Fred Astaire.

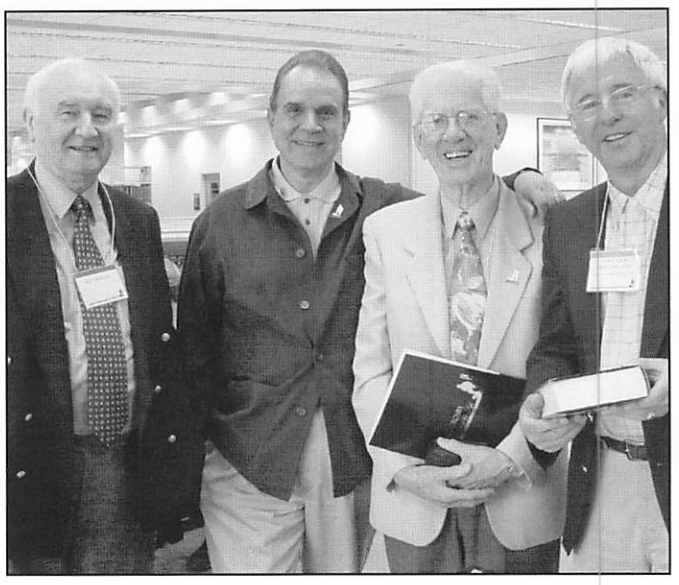
Greg Van Beek writes about his many contacts with Ken on a subsequent page.

Ken Barnes is survived by his wife, Anne, to whom he was married for 41 years. It was Anne who notified your editor of Ken's passing and I emailed members with the sad news. Amongst the many responses were the following:

Thank you for your e-mail concerning the shocking, sudden passing of our dear mutual friend Ken Barnes. After several years of corresponding with him we became close friends when we met during Bing`s recording sessions in Los Angeles and London. We were regular correspondents and as you will remember we met many times on both sides of the Atlantic.

I just received a phone call from Rich Little who, like all of Ken`s friends, was devastated at his passing. My recent exchange of correspondence with Ken will be treasured along with the many mementos of our years of friendship. My prayers and heartfelt condolences are with Anne and Ken`s countless friends and admirers.

Gord Atkinson



Ken at Gonzaga with (l to r) Rich Little, Gord Atkinson and Malcolm Macfarlane.

I'm sorry to hear this sad news. Ken was such a wonderful guy. I had the pleasure to interview him on my radio programs several times over the years. He appeared on my *Sing, Bing, Sing* show back in the 90's and on my specials honoring Fred Astaire as well! I especially love Ken's work with both Fred and Bing! He'll be greatly missed...

Ron Cannatella

Terrible, terrible news. I always enjoyed my visits with Ken very much.

Howard Crosby

Oh that's such sad news. I met Ken just once, at Leeds last year when he kindly signed my copy of his book which I took along on the day. I was enthralled by his recollections of working with Bing. How lucky for us all that Ken was able to coax so much wonderful stuff out of Bing. "Seasons" was the first Bing album I bought in December 1977, so it has a very special place on my list.

God Bless Anne, and THANK YOU, KEN!

Jason Liddiard

I really have to thank Ken for helping to shape so much my understanding of Bing's talents and abilities in his late career. It's Bing's work with Ken that leaves the unshakable impression in my mind that Bing, despite all he had already accomplished, could have yet contributed so much more as a singer, perhaps even in some surprising ways, had he been granted a few more years to continue to work with Ken.

Steve Fay

Ken's funeral took place on Thursday August 20 at Basildon & District Crematorium, Church Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex. A reception was held afterwards at the Gun & Golzar pub, London Road, Bowers Gifford. Many ICC members attended and several sent a report on the proceedings, including Bert Bishop.

Not long back from Ken's funeral. A simple celebration of his life, completely non-religious. There were three recordings played: "Summer Wind", by Johnny Mercer, as we went in, "The Very Thought of You", by Frank Sinatra, after the eulogy, and the service closed with "Seasons", by Bing.

ICC attendance apart from myself and my friend Tracey were Doreen & Freddy Hubbard, Margaret Kliskey, Jason Liddiard and Keith Richmond.

Members of the Sinatra Music Society made themselves known to us.

There were about forty in attendance.

There were quite a few photographs of Ken with Bing, Fred Astaire, Pete Moore, Frank, Peggy Lee and other well-known artistes pinned up in The Gun & Golzar pub where the reception was held.

I was pleased that Anne remembered me and coming to my house a few years ago with Ken to collect some books from the late Lionel Pairpoint collection. She said that you had 'phoned her this morning.

The weather was fair and very warm.

Bert Bishop

Keith Richmond, who had made the long trip from Yorkshire by train, mentioned that, "The eulogy by Dave Smith of the Sinatra Music Society drew praise from the conductor of the service, Mr Piears, who commented that it was one of the best he had heard in his thirty years' experience."

Your Editor has happy memories of being with Ken on many occasions including at Hofstra, Gonzaga and a conference at Cambridge University in August 1999 when Ken, George O'Reilly and myself spoke about Bing. Ken was a great guy and we shall all miss him.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Just One of Those Things - An Evening With Cole Porter

Our president Kathryn Crosby was the special guest star on August 23 when the San Jose Musical Theater in California put on a benefit concert featuring a delightful evening of Cole Porter favorites. It was a fun-filled event with more than 20 local musical theater performers, including Tammy Nelson, one of the stars of San Francisco's popular review *Beach Blanket Babylon*. The cabaret-style show featured more than 30 songs and medleys from the famed Broadway composer and songwriter's vast catalogue, including "Anything Goes," "Night and Day," "You're the Top," "I Get a Kick Out of You" and "Too Darn Hot." Kathryn sang "Love for Sale" and "It's All Right with Me."

In addition to the evening of music, the show was also a fundraiser for the new theater group, which has only been in existence for a year and was formed to fill the cultural void in San Jose that was left when several theater groups shuttered.

Bing Crosby House

Interesting items continue to be placed on this Facebook page by Alex Westby and one of these was a list of the subjects studied by Bing at Gonzaga High School before he entered Gonzaga University.

Bing Crosby - High School Classical Program
1st Year - 1916-1917, 'Division A
Latin (6 hours a week) - Ancient History - Religious Instruction
English - Elementary Algebra - Elocution
2nd Year - 1917-1918, Division B
Religious Instruction - English - Latin (6 hours a week)
Greek (4 hours a week) - Algebra II - Medieval to Modern History - Military Drill - Elocution and Debate
3rd Year - 1918-1919
Religious Instruction - English - Latin (6 hours a week)
Geometry - English History - French - Elocution and Debate
4th Year - 1919-1920
Religious Instruction - English - Latin (5 hours a week)
Physics - U.S. History and Civics - French - Elocution and Debate

Fascinating! I wonder how it compares with the syllabus of modern-day high schools? We have some details of Bing's results during those years as follows:
1st Year - 1916-1917, 'Division A
Bing achieved distinctions in History, English, and Christian Doctrine.
2nd Year - 1917-1918, Division B
"First Honors" in English and "Next in Merit" behind the gold medal winner in Elocution.
3rd Year - 1918-1919
Achieved a distinction in Elocution and a merit in the Senior Academics Debating Society.
4th Year - 1919-1920
Bing received distinctions in Christian Doctrine, English, Latin, History and Civics. Awarded Premium Place for Elocution in the High School Contest, Senior Section.

A Mystery Item

Johnny Green (10 October 1908 - 15 May 1989) was an American songwriter, composer, musical arranger, and conductor who was also the music director for *High Society*.

Michael Feinstein wrote to me in September saying:
"In going through a bunch of Johnny Green letters I found the attached note from Bing to Johnny. I wonder what contraption he sent to Johnny and why it was shrouded in stealth. Johnny's initials indicate he responded." The transcribed text is:

> Dear John,
> This affair has been sitting in my cloak room for 6 years and a half. Being a true "artiste" I am most maladroit at things mechanical, so after several abortive attempts to make it work came to naught, I pitched it in the corner. If it suits your needs I want you to have it. There is another more serious reason why I wish to dispose of the machine, details of which I shall relate to you when we next meet.
>
> Yours, Bing

Johnny Green received the letter on February 18, 1957. What on earth could the item have been? Answers on a postcard...

Bing on Wikipedia

Many of you will be familiar with Wikipedia - the online encyclopaedia where anyone can contribute to the entries.

As many of you will know, **Wikipedia** is a free-access, free-content Internet encyclopaedia, supported and hosted by the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation. Those who can access the site can edit most of its articles, with the expectation that they follow the website's policies. Wikipedia is ranked among the ten most popular websites and constitutes the Internet's largest and most popular general reference work. The English version was started in 2001 and contained 4,999,101 articles as we went to press.

Your editor uses the site frequently for all kinds of research and I thought it might be a good idea if I submitted a page about the International Club Crosby. My first draft was criticised for being too much like an advert rather than a neutral view. So working closely with Wig Wiggins a revised version has been put together which hopefully meets the Wikipedia

guidelines. Please take a look at it and let me have your comments.

Many people have contributed to the Bing Crosby page on Wikipedia and whilst I have made occasional edits (often to correct glaring mistakes), I really have not done very much. I suppose it's up to us so-called Crosby experts to ensure that accurate information about Bing is recorded so I have made a start on Bing's albums (both 78rpm and vinyl). Sometimes this involved merely adding to existing entries, in other cases it was creating a new page. A lot of good work has already been done by a contributor named Utzdman55 on Bing's discography and I have tried to build on this. He had listed many of Bing's early 78rpm albums some of which were compilations which I probably would not have included if starting from scratch. However they are there so I have added any info I had.

Bing's first studio albums (and his first concept albums) appear to have been "Victor Herbert Melodies" vols. 1 and 2 which were made with other artists such as Frances Langford, Florence George and Rudy Vallee and issued as 78 albums A-38 and A-72.

When time permits, I will keep looking at the other Crosby information and see what I can do to add to it.

That Travellin' Two Beat

Your editor has rather immodestly mentioned that I give talks on cruise ships several times a year. This activity grew out of my involvement with Bing and my "Day by Day" book. So naturally I make sure Mr. Crosby is included in my talks wherever possible.

In September, Pat and I were on the P & O ship "Aurora" on a cruise from Southampton in England to New York, Newport and Boston. I was asked to give six 45minute PowerPoint presentations and one of these was about Bing himself. In the talk, I outlined Bing's achievements and clearly this took the breath away of some of the younger members of my audience. Several people came up to me afterwards saying that they had no idea of the breadth of Bing's career.

My other talks on the cruise were:

Sounds of the 50s (I included Bing singing "Now You Has Jazz").

Sounds of the 60s (Bing's Shell commercial fitted in nicely).

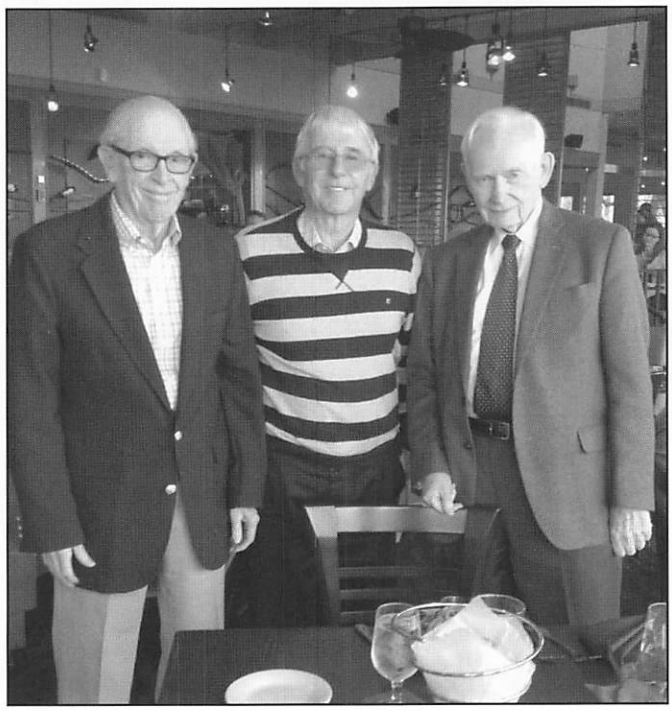
The Great Musicals of Stage and Screen ("True Love" was used.)

Frank Sinatra - "The Voice" (several photos of Bing and Frank, plus the newsreel of them singing "People Will Say We're in Love" were included. In addition, the extract from the cartoon *Hollywood Canine Canteen* showing them as dogs singing got a great reaction from the audience.)

Elvis Presley - "The King" (try as I may, I haven't found a way to legitimately use Bing in this talk yet!)

I have a number of other talks in reserve for other cruises and Bing pops up effectively in those about Perry Como, Vera Lynn, Rosemary Clooney and Michael Holliday.

After the cruise, we got back to the UK in time for the Leeds meeting and then to celebrate our Golden Wedding anniversary, we flew to Washington DC to start a 3-week road trip to New Orleans via the Shenandoah National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Nashville, Memphis and various other places. Naturally, in Washington I got together with Wig Wiggins and Bob Phillips (who spoke at Leeds last year) for an evening of Crosbyana.



(l to r) Wig, your Editor and Bob

Then, like many other disciples in the past, we called in at Front Royal, Virginia to look at the Bing Crosby Stadium. What I didn't realise is that the Visitors Centre in the town also has a nice display about Bing's great day. A very friendly lady went out of her way to get some other Crosby memorabilia from the back room too. She told me that Bing is very highly regarded in the town and a proposal to name the recently rebuilt stadium as something else was soundly defeated. Wig is going to send a copy of the magazine to the Visitors Centre.

The rest of our trip included going to a show at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville and visiting Graceland and Sun Records in Memphis before finishing up in New Orleans with the tail-end of Hurricane Patricia!

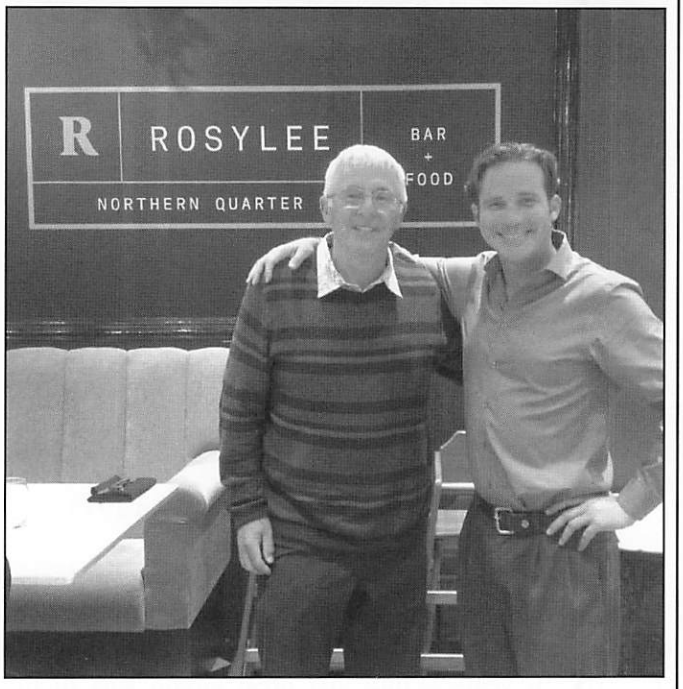
Malcolm Macfarlane

Phil Crosby Jr

In our last issue, we commented that Phil was visiting the UK and your Editor caught up with him in July in Manchester.

Phil (aged 43) was looking to extend his singing career in Europe and when we met he had already picked up a gig with the Jive Aces at the Summertime Swing 2015 event at Saint Hill Manor in East Grinstead in August. He was on his way to Edinburgh for a radio interview and he intended to travel in Europe during subsequent weeks.

As a young man, Phil travelled extensively as a back-packer visiting Australia, and much of Europe as well as most of the USA. He had a variety of jobs along the way before starting out as a singer. Phil gave me a copy of his CD *Time for Christmas* in which he sings many of the holiday classics associated with his grandfather. You can download the songs through the iTunes link at http://philcrosby.com/



Phil and your Editor at their get-together.

I mentioned that I had spent an evening with Phil's dad back in 1999 and this led into a discussion about Phillip Crosby's various marriages and his children. In summary, they were:

Marriage with Sandra Drummond (1958-1963), children: - Dixie Lee (born May 6, 1959), Brian Patrick (born July 3, 1960, died August 19, 1978)

Marriage with Mary Joyce Gabbard (1964-1966) children: - Mary Elizabeth (born 1965?), Bing (known as Flip) (born 1966?)

Marriage with Georgi Edwards (1967-1969). No children.

Marriage with Peggy Joyce Compton (1972-1972) - Phillip Jr. (born September 27, 1972). Peggy subsequently married the actor Jack Klugman.

After Phillip Crosby died in 2004, there was a dispute between his children about the estate and Phil Jr. (who was omitted from the will) finished up unsuccessfully suing his half-siblings Mary and Flip, an action he bitterly regrets now as it has soured relationships between them.

Phil is still in touch with Lindsay Crosby's third wife Susan, and Lindsay's children, who are:

Marriage with Barbara Frederickson (1960-1963) - David (born September 3, 1960)

Marriage with Janet Sue Schwartze (1965-1967) - Sean (born July 25, 1966)

Marriage with Susan Marlin (1968-1989) - Lindsay Harry Jr. (known as "Chip") (born September 29, 1969), Kevin (born September 1971)

Phil is a very personable man and he spoke warmly about Kathryn Crosby who was very kind to him when he turned up unannounced at Michael Feinstein's tribute to Bing in Los Angeles in November, 2003. Kathryn introduced Phil from the stage and clearly made him feel very welcome.

I told Phil about our Leeds meeting and he said that he would do his best to attend before he flew back to the USA but sadly his schedule did not permit this.

Bix, Bing & Rhapsody in Blue

George Patmore drew our attention to this concert whch took place at London's Cadogan Hall on November 22. It was a 1920's spectacular presented by BBC radio's Alyn Shipton and featuring Guy Barker as Bix Beiderbecke, Thomas "Spats" Langham as Bing, Keith Nichols as Paul Whiteman and pianist Nick Dawson performing "Rhapsody in Blue" conducted by Pete Long. The show featured a giant 27 piece orchestra crammed with the finest vintage jazz specialists.

The concert included such classic hits of the 20's as "Dardanella", "That's My Weakness Now", "Singin' the Blues Till My Baby Comes Home", "There Ain't No Sweet Man Worth the Salt of My Tears" and "Because My Baby Don't Mean Maybe Now".

Memories of Ken

Greg Van Beek remembers the late great Ken Barnes

Life is full of irony, and for me, the date August 4th has proven that time and time again. It's a date I've come to dread when I see it looming on the calendar, for more sadness has taken place on that date in my life than on any other I can think of. It all started on August 4, 1984 when my grandfather passed away…too soon…at age 58. Then on that date in 2005 came the news that a dear friend, Nick Perito, had passed away. And now, exactly ten years later, came a shocking e-mail from Malcolm with the subject line simply "Ken Barnes" that sent me reeling:

> "I am sorry to report that Ken passed away this morning after suffering a massive heart attack at the weekend. I have passed on the sincere condolences of us all to his wife Anne. We shall always be grateful for all he did for Bing's career, particularly in the 1970s."

What made it all the more unbelievable was the fact we had just shared a few e-mail exchanges only weeks before, and I knew Ken was still very active with many projects at hand. I suppose there's irony in that as well; much like Bing, Ken left us too soon and also as a result of a sudden heart attack. And he, much like Bing, was still in demand.

I knew I wanted to do some sort of a memorial type article for BING magazine on Ken. Not a biographical piece or obituary type piece, but at least covering the experiences I had with him over the years. We were involved in a few projects together and I introduced him to a few people that were beneficial to him. He was a friend, and I know everyone he came in contact with considered him a friend as well. He was a humble man, who didn't let success go to his head. More importantly, he was a gentleman.

Fortunately I'm somewhat of a hoarder when it comes to correspondence. I saved every letter and e-mail I received from Ken over the years, all printed out and placed in what has become quite a thick folder of papers. So this is a trip down memory lane for me, reliving the correspondence we shared, and the tidbits of information Ken shared with me over the years. Some of which may be new to you as well.

For me, our acquaintance began in January of 1998, when, thanks to Malcolm, I was given Ken's address so that I could write to congratulate him on the release of the 3 CD set "The Complete United Artists Sessions", which quickly became, and still remains, my favorite Bing Crosby CD set. Ken wrote on January 28th:

Of all the many recording projects with which I have been involved over the years, Bing Crosby's Complete U.A. Sessions is the one I am proudest of. A good deal of the credit for its excellent packaging must go to Steve Woof of EMI GOLD.

The recordings, of course, always did prove what a unique singer Bing was - even in his 70s. And this was echoed by the musicians on the sessions - many of whom have written to me recently after buying the set. They all look back on those sessions with happy memories. The fact that the tracks still sound surprisingly modern is due in no small part to Pete Moore's fine arrangements and to the stylish way in which Bing responded to them. You can't fool musicians. They know the difference between a great singer and a poor one. To them, Crosby was a natural - both as a singer and as a man.

Ken with Bing and Pete Moore in 1975.

Ken also mentioned to me that Polydor no longer held the rights to "Seasons" and he was in the process of negotiating a new deal for it. As we all know, it was to be over 10 years before that great album was finally issued on CD. But more on that later.

In my initial letter to Ken, I inquired about the Fred Astaire sessions, which took place around the same time (and with the same musicians) as the sessions with Bing. Ken wrote:

I have been talking with Steve Woof about doing a similar package in 1999 to commemorate Fred's centenary. You may not know it, but Fred's recording career began and ended in London. He made his first recordings here in 1923 and his last in 1975 (age 76). EMI have them all. So Steve and I will probably put them together as a 3-CD set entitled "Fred Astaire – The Complete United Artists Sessions".

This did indeed come to fruition in 1999 and is a fine companion album to the similar 3-CD U.A. Crosby package.

Another reason I had for writing to Ken was I was in the process of helping arranger / conductor Nick Perito choose songs for what turned out to be Mrs. Bob Hope's final album titled "Young at Heart". Among the songs I suggested for Dolores to record was the song Bing recorded in January of 1976 "Children". I asked Ken if he had access to the sheet music for the song, as Nick mentioned Dolores would like to see it. Ken, on my behalf, checked with the song's publisher so that they could send me a printed copy. He wrote that he never met Mrs. Hope, but did meet Bob on a few occasions, adding that Dolores sounds marvelous (I had sent him a tape of one of her previous albums), and wished her continued success in her "new" career. He went on to say, based on the copy of her previous album I sent:

It's quite obvious that she is a singer of skill and experience – and had she pursued a career in singing, she could well have become a success – along the lines of someone like Dinah Shore. I'm also impressed with Nick Perito's arrangements – which proves a deft framework for the vocals. And how nice to hear the obscure verses to such well known songs as "I Cried for You" and "That Old Feeling". The whole album, in fact, is the best definition I know of the phrase "better late than never".

Alas, the song "Children" didn't make it on to Dolores Hope's final album, but a number of them that I did suggest did. Ken not only located the sheet music for me, but took the time to fax it to me from the UK. The first of many kind gestures he did for me over the next 17 years.

Exactly two years to the day after Ken initially wrote me, he sent me an e-mail which led to a project we both worked very hard on. Not a CD release, but a DVD package. Ken had recently started a new venture, a DVD production company called The Laureate Company, and wrote me the following:

I have been asked by a major company to produce a special edition DVD combining Road to Rio (1947) and Road to Bali (1952) with a whole load of extra features. My first thought was to approach Dolores Hope to see if she would contribute to this project.

After seeing her in the recent South Bank documentary on Bing (which, at the time, was only shown in the UK and Ken kindly let me borrow his VHS copy so that I make myself a copy- GVB)***, everybody I spoke to thought she was marvelous. She spoke with such enthusiasm and authority – particularly about the Road pictures and the relationship between Bing and Bob – that it would be a wonderful idea to have her do an audio commentary while watching a screening of each picture.***

This would probably take about three hours of her time – but we could do it over a two day period. The company would love her to do this. Do you think she would be interested?

Before we talk with her, I think maybe I better talk to you. Would you let me know a good time when I might phone you?

Also, let me know what you think about the idea.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Regards, Ken Barnes

I couldn't believe it. The man who produced the albums for Bing that I so dearly loved wanted to work on a project with me? This was incredible. I quickly e-mailed him back with the contact information for Linda Hope at Hope Enterprises, suggesting that perhaps some of the extra features could include excerpts from some of Bob's TV specials featuring Bing as guest. Alas, our phone call never took place, as Ken noted "you might be a mind reader because you answered all of the questions I was going to put to you on the phone." In hindsight, I never did talk with Ken on the phone. It was always via mail or e-mail, save for a delightful meeting in person at Hofstra in 2002.

Things kept getting delayed with this project, and Bob Hope, age 96 at the time, was hospitalized for an extended period with severe gastrointestinal bleeding. Ultimately, the Hope's decided against contributing to the DVD production, and Ken surmised it was indeed because of Bob's delicate health situation at the time that required more and more of their attention. Work on the project continued, however, for over a year, but ultimately, the project never came to fruition. A pity too, as I had suggested they interview Patty Andrews as well for the bonus features, as The Andrews Sisters appear in *Road to Rio.*

One positive came out of all of the research into the various companies that now claimed some ownership (or at least released DVD and VHS versions of the films), that being the discovery of an outtake from *Road to Bali*. The title song, as performed by Bing and Bob in

battered top hat, white tie, and tails, along with Dorothy Lamour in a short sarong.

The footage, albeit in black and white, led to Ken commenting about the number, which he recalled discussing with Bing during one of their sessions together:

I was particularly intrigued by the "Road to Bali" out-take. Alas, it wasn't as impressive as I hoped it would be and I can well understand why it was removed. To begin with, the orchestration was rather pedestrian and not nearly as good as the one on the commercial recording. Even the chart on the film's main title was far better. Hal Walker is no director of musical numbers – all of those dancers surrounding the principals were wasted. Maybe with a good arranger and a choreographer like Michael Kidd or Gene Kelly, something interesting could have been achieved. I think Robert Alton's choreography on the "Mandy" number from "White Christmas" is an outstanding example of how to place stars into a big production number and make it work beautifully. That's what's missing in the "Bali" number. But despite its shortcomings, it's really interesting to see it at last after almost 60 years.

Going through some of our correspondence at the time revealed some more behind the scene information from Ken. As an example, upon sending him a YouTube link with Bing's 1975 appearance on BBC's Top of The Pops, Ken wrote:

Actually, I was with Bing on that date at Top of The Pops. He was in good form and high spirits. Even if the youngsters hadn't heard of him, they certainly liked him – as did everyone else on that show. I can still remember him stopping by the dressing room of Trini Lopez and chatting with him for about five minutes in Spanish. I didn't understand what they were saying but both were certainly laughing and enjoying each others' company.

When I questioned Ken regarding the cheering and applause during "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" during the Crosby Medley on the Palladium album, Ken confirmed my question as to whether or not Bing was doing "high kicks" during the performance. He also mentioned that the performance was recorded on June 25, 1976, the very day "our huckleberry friend" Johnny Mercer died.

I quizzed Ken about the studio album titled "Look My Way" that Rosemary Clooney recorded for United Artists in 1976, he said: ***I was the original choice as producer to do an album with Rosie for U. A. – Pete Moore and I were working on another project and couldn't meet the company's schedule. So she did the studio album with someone else.***

During one discussion after I sent him a DVD of some of Bing and Bob's TV work together from the 70's, Ken wrote: ***It's wonderful to see rare footage of Bing & Bob bantering with each other. What a great team they were. Charm, wit, effortless timing. Where can one find these qualities today? Both of these men are 20th century originals. We'll never see their like again. It was great to hear Bing singing so well in those last years - and these TV performances prove that the excellence of his recordings at the time were no fluke. He could generate great music in any surrounding. It was kind of you to send me such a wonderful package and I will certainly treasure it.***

Around the time of the successful 2003 film revival of the Broadway show "Chicago", I asked Ken how he came to find the songs "Razzle Dazzle" and "Roxie" for Bing (and Bing & Fred) to record in 1975 when the show was brand new and not as well-known as it is today:

When we were planning the albums, Bing looked to me to research and select songs but often making suggestions as to favorites of his own. It was understood that we would include new material and I looked at various publishers' catalogues and found this NEW score for an upcoming musical called "Chicago" by Kander and Ebb (the team that had scored "Cabaret"). I was looking for a snappy philosophical sort of song that would fit the "That's What Life Is All About" album and I liked "Razzle Dazzle". I showed it to Bing and he liked it and agreed to do it. This was around October of 1974 BEFORE the show had opened. We recorded it in London in February of '75. Then in July when we were choosing songs for the Bing-Fred album, I went back to the "Chicago" score again (the show had opened and was doing pretty good business) and I selected "Roxie" – which both Bing & Fred liked immediately. I don't believe either of them had seen the show because it was still new and had not reached the level of popularity that it would enjoy years later. It was just the simple idea of my choosing songs that suited the particular albums we were doing at the time. I can't say for sure but I don't think Bing ever saw the show. Fred either.

A VHS tape of the 1976 Bell Telephone Jubilee (seems we were always exchanging tapes, DVD's and CD's) brought forth comments from Ken, including how Bing had remarked to him how much fun he had doing that show: ***Bing was a joy to work with and usually kept everyone amused with jokes and stories. But he was just an avid a listener as he was a talker. Bing was one of the good guys in our business. So was Fred Astaire. Great guys both.***

After I found a private recording Bing made in 1976 with what sounded like the Joe Bushkin quartet backing him, I sent a copy to Ken and he replied: ***I don't know where they were done, but I did work with all of those musicians on the Palladium show. Bing never did any private recordings with us. It was all professional. That is, except for the poetry readings which I would love to issue. Unfortunately, I have a problem with the person who organized those readings. I allowed him to use the studio – and paid for the studio time out of my own***

pocket. And later paid for Pete Moore to compose instrumental backgrounds. AND paid for musicians to perform these backings. The recordings were intended for charity but this person wanted to issue them for his own profit. So I wouldn't let him have the tapes – and he won't let me issue them. And I certainly won't release them without legal clearance.

The Seasons album....along with these poems...were eventually released on CD by BCE in 2010. Ken said at the time of the original release, Polydor pushed him for an immediate master in order to cash in on the sad news of Bing's passing. As a result, he knew several tracks, namely "Sleigh Ride", "In the Good Old Summertime", "Summer Wind" and the title track could be improved with a better mix. He went on to say:

Back to the remix I did. The only tracks that I left completely intact were the large string orchestrations ("September Song", "Autumn in New York", "June in January" and "Yesterday When I Was Young"). It was generally felt that these mixes were perfect but on reflection, I think I should have remixed them because the presence on the voice in the new mixes is so much better than the originals. But I guess it's a small criticism and I'm just nit picking. It's your opinion that counts with me and I'm glad you approve.

I certainly did approve of the album in its new form. But one thing I didn't approve of was the fact that no one bothered to send him a copy of it!

Since sending the masters to California, I have not heard anything from anyone on the album. Although Mark Brodka did tell me on the phone that Kathryn and Mary both liked the album. He said "Seasons" is Harry's favorite album, which is good to hear. When I asked Robert Bader for his opinion on the new mix, I got no response at all. So I doubt they'll be sending me a copy. But I'll get around to ordering one eventually.

I was incredulous at this news! I immediately offered to send Ken a copy of the album he helped make possible, telling him it was my pleasure to do so. He would only agree if I let him send me a copy of the two CD set of the Johnny Mercer recordings he produced. I quickly agreed. Upon receiving "Seasons", Ken wrote back:

Thank you so much for the SEASONS CD. The Crosby people have certainly produced an attractive package. As far as I can tell, they used my remixes on the songs and the poems. But since I also supplied them with the original multi-track masters (on hard drive), they may have made some minor changes. It's difficult to say. But if so, I am certainly satisfied with the results and I'm sure the fans will be too.

With regards to the aforementioned poetry readings, I listened to them through headphones and immediately noticed a few quick edits I questioned Ken about:

On "If", Bing pronounced the phrase "Yours is THUR earth" rather than "Yours is THEE earth" so we had to find a normal "the" from another section and splice it in. You are the only person who managed to detect the splice. That's what made me wonder if you heard it without the musical background –which tends to obscure the edit somewhat. As for "Lucy Gray", the only word on which Bing stumbled was "Hawthorne" –which he said as "hawthorde". We were barely able to snip the D off the end. I'm glad you didn't pick it up but it's there if you listen closely. His last phrase is actually correct "whistles in the wind". "Wind" is meant to rhyme with "Never Looks behind".

I questioned whether the harmonica player heard on the poetry was the same player used two years prior on the song "Have a Nice Day". Ken wrote:

You are right about the harmonica player. It's the late Tommy Reilly. He also played on Bing's spoken word album of "Tom Sawyer". He was our country's foremost harmonica player – and we always hired him.

Another aspect of the "Seasons" album that Ken and I discussed, albeit almost nine years prior to its CD release, was the album cover shoot. In 2001, the photographer Gered Mankowitz, was interviewed for the SCOTSMAN newspaper about his long career photographing celebrities. Mankowitz cited Bing as being the "worst, baddest of all" to work with and said he was "the one person he never cared if he ever met again", going on to call him "the worst, most miserable subject I had ever photographed". I was shocked when I read this, as I know Ken was involved with that photo shoot, (that took place just 3 days before Bing's death), I forwarded the article on to Ken. He, in turn, wrote a lengthy essay to send to the writer of the newspaper piece and forwarded it on to me. This can be seen on the BING magazine web site in the *Day by Day* section under October 1977, but suffice it to say, Ken's version of the events that October afternoon is far different from Mr. Mankowitz's recollections.

At one point in 2001, Ken and I exchanged CD's once again. He mentioned he produced a CD of Peggy Lee live at the London Palladium in March of 1977. He offered to send me a copy, and I offered to send him a copy of the then-new "Robin & the 7 Hoods" gold soundtrack CD that had just been released through the auspices of Sinatra Enterprises. This led to a discussion of the film - and the music:

"Robin" is really a good score, and so well-produced. It deserves to be better known. Although I have the film on laserdisc (in widescreen), I never realized until I played this CD that there isn't a single love song in the movie –unless you count "Any Man Who Loves His Mother" (which is done as a send-up) and "My Kind of Town" (which is a love song to Chicago). The nearest thing to a romantic song is "I Like to Lead When I Dance" – which was cut from the film. A touch of romance, I think, would've helped the film in so many ways. But it's too late now. I must tell you that when I was working with Fred Astaire, he said

to me "Bing didn't have to do that stupid film with Sinatra's crowd. He was much bigger than any of the others in that cast. Why did he do it?" I think the film is fun. And I love the CD.

As a result of my sending him this CD, I also introduced Ken to Charlie Pignone, and this led to a rather fruitful working relationship with Sinatra Enterprises between the two, and close friendship between Charlie and Ken.

Peggy Lee not only did the live album at the Palladium for Ken in March 1977, but also a studio album that's never been released on CD…until now, this December, in what turned out to be the final project Ken was working on before his untimely passing. I asked Ken back in 2001 if Bing was able to hear the two Peggy Lee albums before his passing, and Ken said that yes, Bing did hear them and loved them.

Bing was scheduled to record his next album for Polydor records in late 1977…his first ever duet album with Mr. Robert Hope. Song selection was well under way at the time of Bing's passing, and Ken kindly provided me the songs that would've appeared on the album "Bing & Bob: Straight Down the Middle.

Regarding the plans we had originally for the Bing-Bob duet project - which were discussed more with Bing than Bob (although I did have a rather lengthy phone conversation with Bob in September 1977) – certainly included "Straight Down the Middle" (for which Sammy Cahn promised me he would write a new special set of lyrics). There was also an original which Pete Moore and I were in the process of writing called "Let the Entertainment Start" (which we abandoned on the news of Bing's death). Other titles included Cole Porter's "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" (from "Kiss Me Kate"), "All I Need Is the Girl" (from "Gypsy"), "Teamwork" (from "The Road to Hong Kong", with new lyrics by Sammy Cahn), "Road to Morocco" (with new lyrics by Sammy Cahn – unwritten at the time), "Glow Worm" (for which Bing and I were discussing a new lyric approach) "Two of a Kind" (by Johnny Mercer and Bobby Darin), "Bob White", and "Style" (from Robin & the 7 Hoods). And that's about all I can remember after 22 years (this was in 1999 – GVB). ***We were, of course, intending to firm up all these plans when we met with the two of them in late October of 1977.***

One of the highlights for me of the Hofstra conference on Bing in Hempstead, NY in November of 2002 was meeting Ken in person and being able to talk at length with him, face to face. Typical of the man, upon our first handshake, he presented me with a DVD of his Laureate Company's then-newly-released issue of the Frank Sinatra film "The Man with the Golden Arm". I still treasure that DVD to this day and think of Ken each time I watch it.

The last e-mail exchange I had with Ken took place a little over a month before his passing, on June 25th and 26th, when I asked him about the origins of the song "Beautiful Memories". As always, he was most generous with his time and recollections, and that's how I shall always remember him:

Greg and Ken meet up at Hofstra.

It's always good to hear from you. I trust you are well and keeping busy as ever. The song "Beautiful Memories" was introduced to me by bass player Herbie Flowers – who co-wrote it with Roger Cook. I played it to Bing and he thought it was "a pretty cute piece of material." So we added it to the recording schedule. It was Bing's idea to add the whistling, and Pete Moore arranged to accommodate his wishes. This was the one album where Bing couldn't make the recording date. So we put the backing down in London and I flew to LA to record Bing's vocals in October of 1976. Normally he didn't like to record to a backing track, but it turned out to be a pretty good album. Keep well.

I followed up by asking him about the track "Play a Simple Melody" from the Palladium album. I noticed what sounded like a quick fade / edit right after Harry sings 'I wanna listen to rag....', which made me wonder if the first chorus stronger during one performance, but the second chorus weaker, and vice versa on the second performance that the two best portions were spliced together? Ken's final answer to my seemingly endless string of questions spanning our 17 years of friendship was as follows:

No, I have no recollection of splicing "Play a Simple Melody" from the two nights of recording at the Palladium. After almost 40 years, I can't remember which night it came from. But it was a complete take. With live recordings you can sometimes get inconsistencies. The ONLY instance of combining one track from both nights occurred in "Now You Has

Jazz." On the first night, both the vocal and the band (and Joe Bushkin's trumpet break) were perfect. The one problem was the bass track, which was badly distorted. On the second night, the bass track was perfect. But everything else was slightly sub-standard. So – in the mixing and editing process – I took the bass from the second night and dubbed it onto the first night's performance. This would have been impossible if the tempo hadn't matched. But good old Pete Moore (bless him) counted the band in perfectly - and we wound up with a great take.

Incidentally, there is one amusing story that you might like to hear. Joe Bushkin played exactly the same trumpet break each night on "Now You Has Jazz" and one night, the trumpet players in the band decided to have some fun by playing that same break along with him. Bing found this amusing – but Joe didn't. It never happened again.

Ken was always supportive of our work with the ICC, and never failed to offer a complimentary e-mail upon receipt of each new issue of BING. A sampling of his praise to Malcolm and myself is as follows:

Just received the latest BING and couldn't put it down. It's a knockout from cover to cover.

Just a quick note to thank you both for the current edition of BING. I don't know how you do it, but you and your associates continually surprise me with the incredible variety of NEW information on the life and career of our favorite singer. Amazing.

My congratulations to you both – and to everyone connected with the 75th anniversary edition of BING. While the magazine is well up to its usual high standard, there is a sense of occasion with this latest edition and, of course, a distinction that no other such club or society can claim. Keep up the good work and every good wish for the future.

Ken's memorial service was held on August 20th and was well attended by several ICC members, who no doubt will have their own reports in this issue. It is fitting that the final song played at the service was Bing's recording of "Seasons".

In closing, I leave you with a quote Ken sent me, that he noted appeared on a plaque in the den of Johnny Mercer's home in Bel-Air, California. It read:

"It is the best of all trades, to make songs
And the second best to sing them"
Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)

Goodbye, my friend. Rest amongst the angels, content with the fact that your life's work will live on for future generations to come.

Greg Van Beek

Bing show coming to Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

The New Theatre on Main, W359 N5920 Brown Street, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin will present "Bing Crosby: Christmas on the Air," on 7:30 p.m. December 11 and 12.

The pre-show publicity states that: "Matt Zembrowski and Paula Foley Tillen bring this loving, heartfelt tribute to Bing Crosby that will make you feel as warm as a crackling fire and hoping for a "White Christmas." This homage to old-time radio and the golden era of song is a Christmas present that promises to leave you with a Yuletide feeling right through the holidays. Featuring "Silver Bells," "Mele Kalikimaka," "Christmas in Killarney" and many other Crosby Christmas favorites, this sparkling bit of holiday nostalgia is sure to warm the soul on a cold winter's night."

Greg Van Beek hopes to get along to see the show.

Harper of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club talks Old Hollywood

The Coast News of July 5 focused on Bing's involvement in the Del Mar racecourse.

RANCHO SANTA FE - At a recent "Get Smart" series at the Rancho Santa Fe Golf Club, those in attendance had the opportunity to hear Joe Harper, CEO of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, speak about the upcoming racing season. He also spoke about the Hollywood-era of the Del Mar Racetrack.

And Harper knows a thing or two about old Hollywood. Legendary American filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille was his grandfather and his uncle was actor, writer and painter Anthony Quinn.

"Del Mar got its start in Hollywood," Harper said. "It has an interesting history."

Bing and Pat O'Brien watch the proceedings at Del Mar.

The history began with Bing Crosby who had an estate in Rancho Santa Fe. An avid golfer, he also had horses and raised them. According to Harper, Crosby

along with some big Hollywood producers and actors all got on board to create the construction of the Del Mar Racetrack.

While Crosby was a pretty good singer, Harper said, he was also a great marketing person. Back in those Crosby days, the only opportunity people had to see celebrities was on the silver screen.

"There was no place where people could go to see the stars," he said. "So to actually see one, you came to Del Mar."

Common faces were Cary Grant, Randolph Scott, Jimmy Durante, and Bob Hope. And the powerhouse who made that happen was Crosby. Harper went on to say that Crosby was an influential man in Hollywood.

"He was one of the few guys in Hollywood that managed to get out from under the studio's control. Most of the stars in that time were under the contract of the studios," he said. "Bing had some power."

And when Crosby wanted his Hollywood friends at the track on a certain day, they were there. They never disappointed.

Harper then shared another yesteryear story. There were very few restaurants in Del Mar at the time and there was a particular patio area where everyone congregated. Hope was down in Del Mar for the day and joined in. With music playing in the background, Hope and Crosby started telling jokes and had everyone laughing.

"They really had the crowd going," he said.

The men looked at each other, Harper said, and the idea spurred to do some road pictures.

A handful of films were made including *Road to Bali, Road to Rio, Road to Morocco*, and more.

"The Hollywood thing and Del Mar made sense because of the people who came here," Harper said.

Christina Macone-Greene

Where the Turf Meets the Surf

As we know, Bing recorded this song back in 1941 and it has been played at the Del Mar race track at every race meeting ever since. What your editor did not know, was that for the last eight years, there has been a "Sing with Bing" slot between the 5th and 6th races at every Del Mar meeting. People volunteer to sing "Where the Turf" and each season's slots are always booked in advance. Amazing!

The CBS-TV station in San Diego ran a feature on the event in August and it was amusing to hear various people attempting the song.

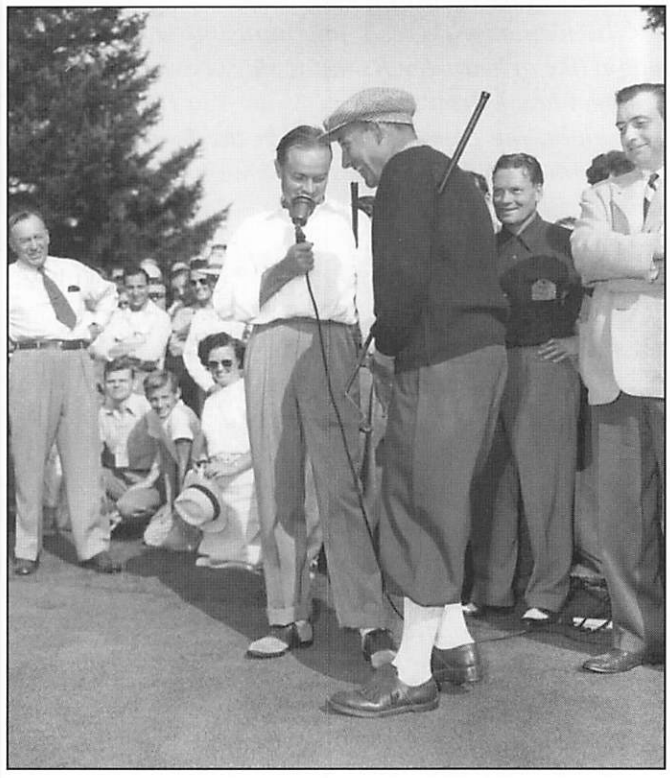
Priceless memories for $1.50

The *Florida Today* web site carried a nice little article in August.

Ira Adams of Melbourne grew up in Indiana, and one afternoon during summer vacation in 1944 *(sic - it was May 28, 1945)*, he happened to be at the South Bend Country Club.

When he saw a crowd gathered around the 18th green, he walked over out of curiosity and heard someone say excitedly: "It's Bing Crosby and Bob Hope!"

These two, Hollywood's most famous and popular at the time, had stopped over for a round of their beloved golf, en route overseas to entertain the troops.



When Crosby and Hope finished their round, adoring fans lined up to get their autographs, and they willingly obliged. Young Ira grabbed a scorecard and pencil, got in line and secured both signatures. One of the young caddies, perhaps too shy to join the throng, offered Ira 50 cents for his card. Sure, thought Ira. Easy money. So he sold the card and immediately jumped back into the line to get a replacement.

When he emerged with two fresh autographs, a man offered him a dollar for his card. That was big money at the time for a kid scraping together pocket change, too much to resist, so he sold his second card and rejoined the line.

When he got to Crosby, Bing hesitated, gave him a hard look, then signed without a word. But when he got to Hope, Bob said, "This is getting to be a habit, ain't it, boy?" He signed anyway and the crowd laughed, knowing what the youngster was up to.

At that point, Ira figured that his little impromptu business had reached its limits, so he kept the last two autographs for himself and called it quits.

He still has that signed scorecard, the penciled autographs having faded somewhat over the years, but are still legible. What hasn't faded is the memory of

meeting two of Hollywood's greats, and spinning the experience into some windfall profit.

He just can't remember how he spent the $1.50.

Lou Gerber

Once in a Lifetime

Martin McQuade reports on an important tribute to Frank Sinatra.

Sinatra: An American Icon is an exhibit celebrating the singer's centennial and is presented by The Grammy Museum, in collaboration with The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, The Sinatra family, Frank Sinatra Enterprises, and The Frank Sinatra Collection, USC School of Cinematic Arts. Having closed in New York on September 4, the display will open at The Grammy Museum in Los Angeles on October 21 and run through February 15, 2016.

This is a spectacular overview of the massive Sinatra legacy, with special emphasis on Sinatra's roots. There is notable mention of Bing's impact upon Sinatra, especially that life-changing day in 1933 when the young Hoboken native saw his idol perform at Loew's Jersey Theater. In fact, a facsimile of a local trolley car which Sinatra would regularly take features an advertisement for that Jersey City engagement, announcing, "Bing Crosby - In Person!" Nearby, a timeline indicates seminal moments of Sinatra's early life; among them, his baptism, his meeting his future wife Nancy and witnessing Bing live. A showcase devoted to "Early Influences" offers further testimony to Sinatra's debt to Bing. This contains several artifacts provided by the Crosby estate. These include Bing's fedora and pipe, and an acetate recording from a 1934 *Woodbury Show* of "Ridin' around in the Rain," a performance that may very well have impressed the fledgling crooner.

A particular highlight is a postcard circa 1928 from Bing to his mother, which simply states, "I'm on my way." The image is of The Whiteman Band with an arrow penciled in by Bing pointing to himself. The card presages Sinatra's own band-singing roots. A mid-forties photo of Sinatra surrounded by the Crosby Boys underscores a reminiscence spurred by a question from this reporter to Nancy Sinatra at a recent Paley Center seminar devoted to her father's TV career. At that time, Nancy recalled visits by Bing's sons to the Sinatra home.

The exhibition includes Al Hirschfeld's classic drawing, *American Popular Song*. The lithograph shows *The Voice*, surrounded by fellow pop stars, embraced by *The Groaner.* A conversation, accessible through headphones, between Nancy and Sinatra historian Charles Pignone, focuses on Sinatra's vocal inspirations, citing Bing, Billie Holliday and Louis Armstrong. A lobby card from *Robin and The Seven Hoods* rounds out the connection. Screenings took place in conjunction with the exhibit at the adjoining Bruno Walter Auditorium: High *Society* on June 4, and *Jimmy Van Heusen: Swingin' with Frank and Bing* on July 16.

Serving as an inscription for this survey, the very first thing on view to visitors is Bing's famous tongue-in-cheek quote. "Frank Sinatra is a singer who comes along once in a lifetime, but why did he have to come in mine?" This splendid survey honors that extraordinary lifetime of achievement, artistry and style.

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The 10th anniversary celebration of *The Jazz Age Lawn Party*, hosted by Michael Arenella and His Dreamland Orchestra, continued on August 15 and 16 on Governors' Island. Throngs of fans relished the music of the late twenties and early thirties. The Dreamland Follies, headed by troubadour Gregory Moore, reminded one and all of Bing's imprint upon the era with his dramatic rendition of "Temptation."

Martin McQuade

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD. They also have thousands of Public Domain films and TV shows. Films are sold on DVD-R and Mpeg2 video file formats.

Neil Perks, Hollywood, Birmingham, UK (email: neil.perks@hotmail.co.uk, phone: 07881 288 460)

New member Neil would like some help to build up his collection and he writes:

"Can any members of the ICC help at all with the following Bing Crosby albums that I would like for my collection? The albums are: "How the West Was Won" - "Join Bing and Sing Along 101 Gang Songs" - "Holiday in Europe" - "Bing Crosby on the Happy Side" - "America I Hear You Singing" - "Robin and the Seven Hoods" - "A Time to be Jolly" Also Jonzos "Chronological Bing Crosby" albums from 1932 onwards. Any help would be greatly appreciated, I am also after 25 of Bing's movies on DVD but can only play Region 2 or 0 discs, if anyone can help with these please get in touch and I can inform you of my "wants". You can contact me with a price for any of the above via email at neil.perks@hotmail.co.uk or call/text 07881 288 460."

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619 email: raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Free lists available by email. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing and other easy listening artists' CDs, please contact Ray.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: abcsoc@dodo.com)

The Society has been running since 1977 having originally been formed by the late Bob Machliss. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights.

In August, the film night had two Crosby movies – *Road to Zanzibar* and *Too Much Harmony*. On October 27, *Sing You Sinners* was the main attraction plus the Johnny Carson "Tonight" Show from March 5, 1976 featuring Bing, Ray Bolger and Marvin Hamlisch as the guests. A further film night is planned for December 8. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains a mass of information plus some excellent audio and video vaults which contain much rare material.

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and the number of people who have "liked" the site is now 273,761.

Bing Crosby House

Fairly new to Facebook. Go to:
www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby-House/296302530555116
Rare items from Gonzaga's collection are frequently displayed and it's well worth a look. Alex Westby, a senior majoring in History with a certification in teaching Social Studies at the secondary level, has recently taken over responsibilty for posting on the page

Bing Crosby on Twitter

See www.twitter.com/Bingconstantly for this site which has lots of useful tweets and has 6172 followers now. @Bing_Crosby is still the place to go for Bing Crosby Inc. There are 3497 followers as we go to press.

BING magazine

We are very proud of this site which contains a considerable amount of reference material and Lionel Pairpoint's marvellous radio book, Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography" and Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" can all be accessed. Your editor's book "Bing Crosby – Day by Day" is on the site too. All of these books are being updated as new information arises. Since the site was redesigned some years ago by Howard Crossland, it has been visited no less than 32, 479 times.

See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Richard Baker, who created the online Discography, tells us that he has been unable to devote the time to it that he would like and that it has in consequence not been updated as frequently as it needs. He says he is delighted and very grateful that David Currington, the ICC representative in Australasia, has volunteered to take it over. David has completed an update and the opportunity has been taken to re-home it on the BING magazine website at:
http://www.bingmagazine.co.uk/bingmagazine/crosby.html, There is a mirror at the original site redirecting users to the new version and all existing links should still work.

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive

David Lobosco runs this blog which has news and many stories about Bing at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

John Marshall's Compilations

John's excellent 'A Night At The Movies', 'Bing - The Written Word' and 'Footloose Follies' with their many clips of Bing can best be found by using Google as your search engine. As in *google internet archive john c marshall footloose follies.*

Books 'n' Bing

1. Frank Sinatra: An Extraordinary Life

By Spencer Leigh, Softcover: 350 pages, Publisher: McNidder & Grace (October 5, 2015), ISBN: 9780857160867. UK £15, USA $22.95, Canada $29.95

There is a plethora of new books about Frank Sinatra and one of the first to reach your Editor was this fact-packed and comprehensive tome from Spencer Leigh. Spencer is a BBC radio presenter and author, with particular expertise in the development of pop and rock music and culture in Britain. He is a prolific author and an acknowledged expert on The Beatles. In his introduction, he says, "Frank Sinatra has been under my skin for years and I've always been fascinated by him." Mr. Leigh is clearly a fan of Sinatra's singing but does not hold back from talking about Sinatra's less likeable traits and behaviour. The book is very readable indeed as it traces the subject's life with many related facts about other artists thrown in. Inevitably in a book with so much information there will be errors and the early chapter about Bing could have done with one of our experts looking over it first. Mildred Bailey did not introduce Bing to Paul Whiteman as stated and so on. (Richard Zoglin made exactly the same mistake in his book about Bob Hope). However it's hard to disagree with the author's contention that "Bing's musical legacy has dimmed with the years and his records can only be heard in an historical context today while many of Sinatra's still seem contemporary."

Much research has gone into this detailed account but no source notes are provided and there is only a token bibliography. More importantly, the book lacks an index and I gently complained about this and the relatively small print size to Spencer. He replied saying, "I wanted an index (I am married to a librarian!) but again the publisher could only go to four pages and I thought that was worse than none at all. After all, I would only have space to say Bing was on 80 pages in the book without identifying why. Fortunately, as the book doesn't jump about too much it should not to be too hard to locate whatever is wanted."

Frank and Bing on a 1959 TV show.

I enjoyed this book as it moves at a fast pace and seems to give a balanced view of Mr. Sinatra's incredible life. It's full of amusing anecdotes about all kinds of people too. Spencer enthusiastically discusses a great many of Frank's recordings but I shall be interested to know if the book is welcomed by the Sinatra devotees in view of the unsavoury details given about his life.

2. Duxford and the Big Wings 1940-45: RAF and USAAF Fighter Pilots at War

By Martin W. Bowman, Hardcover: 304 pages. Publisher: Pen & Sword Aviation (August 20, 2009), ISBN-10: 1848840241, ISBN-13: 978-1848840249, £19.99 from Amazon

Bert Bishop spotted a nice quote from this book.
"All the Canadians seemed fearless and none more so than Pilot Officer Willie McKnight, 'a flinty-eyed little dead shot of twenty from Calgary, who had already knocked down several German aircraft in the shambles in France.' Under the tender lips was a tough little man with a DFC. He had a weakness for soft music; he had a large collection of Bing Crosby records and played them endlessly in the mess, being greatly irritated when Lawrence Cryderman, a former school teacher from Islington, Ontario, sang over the top of the velvety Crosby." (Page 33)

3. Book Notes from Martin McQuade

Olivier, (MacLehose Press; 2013) a biography by Philip Ziegler, offers this intriguing information, derived from a letter from Bob Hope to Laurence Olivier, dated September 29, 1961.

Olivier had to turn down one invitation that would have cost him little effort and caused him some amusement. Bob Hope wrote to say that he and Bing Crosby were planning to enrich the next of their Road series – The Road to Hong Kong - with a series of cameo parts in which major stars - Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, David Niven, and Sophia Loren among them - would appear unexpectedly, without billing, and utter a line or two. Hope would be a Chinese coolie pulling a rickshaw. He would turn to his passenger, Bing Crosby, and say, "I bet Laurence Olivier wouldn't play a part like this." Then the camera would cut to Olivier standing by a nearby lamppost, who would say, "nobody made me an offer." Hope concluded, "to do a scene without having to wait for Marilyn?" (a reference to Olivier's frustration directing the tardy bombshell in his 1957 film, *The Prince and The Showgirl*). *Olivier was tempted but could not find a slot in his crowded diary. He genuinely regretted it. He would have cut short the run of Semi-Detached* (a play in which Olivier was starring in London) to *fit in a quick visit to Hollywood - or, for that matter, Hong Kong.* Although Loren does not appear in *The Road to Hong Kong*, Bing considered her, as well as Gina Lollobrigida, for the female lead, according to TCM.

Bing and Bob with two of the stars who made guest appearances in *The Road to Hong Kong*

It's A Long Story - My Life (Little, Brown, and Co.; 2015) is Willie Nelson's memoir, written with the assistance of David Ritz. Regarding his youth, Nelson confides, *There was naturalness in the sound of Bing Crosby's voice, a singer who made you feel that he was right there in the room telling you a story. I didn't know the word intimacy then, but I felt it. Even in Abbott, Texas, where it hardly ever snowed, White Christmas had me dreaming of wintry landscapes. Like Sinatra, Crosby turned singing into more of a conversation than a performance, He put you at ease. He spoke right to you. He made you feel he truly cared about you.*

In 1986, Nelson appeared in the second remake of John Ford's classic *Stagecoach*, in which he played gunslinger/dentist Doc Holliday, a variation on the character of Doc Boone, portrayed by Thomas Mitchell in the original, and by Bing in the 1966 version. Nelson tells an amusing anecdote. *In one scene, a female character, played by Bing Crosby's daughter Mary, was giving birth. Before they had a chance to pull out the baby, I pulled out a live rabbit. Everyone howled. Everyone, that is, except the director.*

You Might Remember Me (St. Martin's Press ; 2014) by Mike Thomas recounts the life and times of *Saturday Night Live* player Phil Hartman and provides perspective on an offbeat tableau from that show involving Hartman and colleague Jan Hooks which used a Crosby recording as its springboard.

The two shifted gears from comedic to semi-dramatic for a tonally unique short film by Tom Schiller called Love Is a Dream. Its title comes from a song that Bing Crosby recorded for Billy Wilder's 1948 film, The Emperor Waltz. "Not putting them down, but we were around all of those stand-up comics [at SNL] who wanted a quick, quick laugh," says Hooks, "and Phil and I were kind of different animals in a way. We were comic actors instead of comics." Drama-tinged roles, therefore, weren't much of a stretch. Featuring tip-notch cinematography by Neal Marshad, Love was shot on film in a small studio in downtown Manhattan and unfolds like this: After an older security guard (Phil, his face initially unrevealed) lets an elderly woman (Hooks) into a bank vault (located in Tribeca), she pulls out a safety deposit box and opens it on a nearby table to inspect the contents: a bejeweled tiara and necklace carefully wrapped in velvet. Setting the tiara on her head, she is transported back in time to her younger days, where she encounters an equally spry Phil in an old-time soldier's uniform. Adorned with a red sash across the chest and epaulets on the shoulders, the getup causes him to resemble a toy soldier in The Nutcracker. By using only primary hues, Schiller and Marshad are able to approximate a Technicolor effect a la The Wizard of Oz. As Phil and Hooks dance to an orchestrated melody in three-quarter-time (a small string ensemble plays nearby), both lip-sync to a pre-recorded track. Since the original tune features only Crosby's singing, Schiller found a female vocalist to perform Hook's portion. Channeling Crosby, Phil begins, Love is a dream, yet it's so real/ Hard to explain, just how you feel.

The realization that both Hartman and Hooks have since passed away lends added poignancy to this wistful vignette, which was first broadcast on SNL in December, 1988 and repeated in 1998 in homage to Hartman and in 2014 in homage to Hooks. *Love Is a Dream* may be viewed at:
http://www.hulu.com/watch/698984

In *Penelope Fitzgerald: A Life* (Alfred A. Knopf; 2014) biographer Hermione Lee recounts that the renowned British novelist and her son Valpy travelled to New York on The Queen Mary in 1952. "What Valpy remembered of this journey was that Bing Crosby was on board, and at one point Penelope managed to infiltrate first class so that Valpy could get his autograph."

Empire of Self: A Life of Gore Vidal by Jay Parini (Doubleday; 2015) recounts an event involving Bing. This gathering of strange bedfellows may be apocryphal, but here it is for the record. "In June, Gore served as an alternate delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. Suddenly he found his network of Hollywood connections useful, playing host to a large party at Romanoff's on July 12, 1960. He brought together a range of political and Democratic operatives, with the likes of Gary Cooper, Charlton Heston, Bing Crosby and others attending. Norman Mailer was there too, looking warily around the room. Lyndon Johnson put in a brief appearance, but JFK stayed away, much to Gore's annoyance. (Gore later claimed that Kennedy had a date that night.)"

Martin McQuade

(Editor: As Martin says, the Gore Vidal story probably was apocryphal, Bing was a Republican not a Democrat, and anyway he and Kathryn were in Banff, Canada at that time. It is amazing how people make things up and print them in books as a permanent record which others then use. In the book about Bob Hope by Richard Zoglin which we mentioned in our last two issues, there is the following "fact" on page 157.

> "Once, when they *(Hope and Crosby)* were leaving their hotel in New York City after an appearance together to promote *Road to Singapore,* Crosby saw Hope stuffing some fan mail into a pillowcase. "What the hell are you doing that for?" he asked. Hope said he was taking the letters back home so that his secretary could answer them. "I'll show you what I do with my fan mail," said Crosby. He felt through some envelopes, found a quarter in one that had been enclosed by a fan for postage and photos, pocketed the change, and tossed the letter into wastebasket."

The source of this is from an unpublished memoir by Bob Hope's publicist Frank Liberman who clearly didn't like Bing and obviously did not know of the superb system Crosby had set up some years before to deal with the massive fan mail he received. Also we know from "Day by Day" that Bing did not go to New York to promote Road to Singapore. I suppose facts don't matter to publicists and it's a pity that Mr. Zoglin did not investigate the claim further before printing such a derogatory story.)

Howard Crosby - A Tribute to Bing

On October 20, Howard Crosby presented his tribute to his Uncle at the Bing Crosby Theater in Spokane. Howard sang songs from Bing's catalogue from the 1930s to the 1970s. Joining Howard on piano was the celebrated accompanist, Randy Kaping. Howard and Randy treated concert guests to songs from Bing's film, radio, and recording career, across genres, including Irish tunes from Bing's ancestral heritage.

Hot Club of Spokane joined Howard on stage to perform tunes from Bing's early years on the 1920s jazz scene. Throughout the show, Howard regaled the audience with stories about "Uncle Bing" from their days together on the golf course and at family gatherings and holidays. To augment the songs and stories, video and photography of Bing's storied life were presented on the Bing Crosby Theater's giant motion picture screen.

Linked to the show was an excellent article by Howard in the September/October in Nostalgia Magazine (see www.nostalgiamagazine.net/). Howard talked about Bing and his interactions with him and several rare family photos were included. Howard has kindly given me permission to reproduce his article here.

Spokane's Bing Crosby: The World's Legendary Entertainer

by Howard Crosby

People often ask me exactly how I am related to Bing Crosby, and I often reply, "Well, his parents were my grandparents." That usually gets a funny stare, and then I explain that Uncle Bing was the younger brother of my Dad, Ted Crosby. They were very close in age, just over a year apart - Irish twins really. They slept in the same bed on the sleeping porch on East Sharp Avenue in the house my Grandfather built across from College Hall at Gonzaga University. Gonzaga, I might add, has purchased the house, and they have now converted it into a wonderful museum dedicated to their own most prominent alum, Bing Crosby!

This October, I am absolutely delighted to be sharing more family stories, and singing many of Bing's favorite tunes, at the Bing Crosby Theater with my great friend Randy Kaping. Hot Club of Spokane will also put in an appearance in our show entitled "A Tribute to Bing Crosby."

As boys growing up, Dad was the student, a real bookworm and an "A" student, while Bing was the family athlete. Bing excelled in swimming, baseball, and golf, and he started as a caddy at Downriver Golf Course

when it opened for play in 1915.

Many years later, I learned from my aunts and uncles that Dad never had any chores around the house, nor did he have to get any outside jobs like mowing lawns, shoveling snow or babysitting to help with the household bills, as all of his brothers and sisters did. When the others would complain, "Why doesn't Ted have to do anything?" my Grandmother Kate would reply, "Leave Ted alone and let him study! He's going to be a priest!" Somehow that never quite panned out.

By the time Uncle Bing became a star, Dad was already an executive with Washington Water Power in Spokane. Good jobs weren't that plentiful during the depression, so there was never any thought of pulling up stakes and leaving Spokane. So except for a couple of brief stints in Washington D.C. and California, Dad remained in town. Spokane is where I grew up. As a boy, I knew there was something special about my uncle (other kids in school whispering and pointing at me) but we only saw him on occasional visits to California, or when he would come to Spokane to visit Gonzaga. Then golf happened.

By my late teens, I had become a pretty fair golfer, playing off a one handicap. In fact, I earned a golf scholarship to the University of Idaho. I first played golf with Uncle Bing as a fifteen year old, at the San Francisco Golf Club in the summer of 1967. He was, as everyone knows, an avid golfer and a very good player. I was a big, strong kid, and I could hit the ball a long ways. He took an interest in my game, and over the next decade, I played a number of rounds of golf with Uncle Bing at some great places like Pebble Beach, Cypress Point, Burlingame Country Club, Bel Air Country Club, and the Olympic Club, to name a few.

Even in his later years, Bing was a solid single digit handicapper, with an easy rhythm and a good short game. He had been playing since he was 12, and I remember one time we had finished a morning round and were eating lunch in the clubhouse grill. A friend of

Bing and family pause for a photo at Ted Crosby's home in the Spokane Valley in 1967. From left to right: Harry, Bing, Mary, Ted, Howard, Edward, and Nathaniel Crosby. Photo courtesy of the Howard Crosby Family Archives.

his spotted him and came over to say hello, and he asked Bing if he was playing much golf. Bing's reply: "Just days."

After Dad died in December of 1973, Uncle Bing seemed to take an even more profound interest in me and my golf, and he sent me all expense paid invitations to play as an amateur competitor in the prestigious Bing Crosby National Pro-Am in 1975, 1976 and 1977. Those trips remain some of the best memories of my life. And it was because of golf that I really got to know my Uncle, and not just as an entertainment legend, but also as a man.

For a very public figure, and for someone who lived in the glare of the spotlight for nearly fifty years, Bing Crosby was a very private person. He loved quiet days on the links, or fishing or hunting, either all alone or with a few close friends. He was not an entertainer who lived for the adulation of the crowd (like his friend Bob Hope), and in fact, he was positively embarrassed by those who talked of him as being some kind of legend or great man. This kind of talk grated against a deep-seated humility that was both genuine and immovable. He never really believed that he was a great singer or actor, and often attributed his success to extraordinary good luck!

Of course, the overwhelming statistics of his unparalleled career tell a different story: Over 2,000 commercial recordings, 38 #1 hit songs, starring roles in 63 feature films, over 1 billion tickets sold at the box office, and on and on. These are unmatched by any other entertainer, to this day!

I never really realized I had a talent for singing until I was in my late twenties, but over the last twenty years or so, I've had a lot of fun with music. I have recorded a couple of albums, and I've been privileged to entertain audiences not only locally here in the Pacific Northwest, but also in far flung places like London, Dublin, Boston and Texas. When people tell me they think I sound like Bing, I tell them to have their hearing aid checked! At least, I usually sing his songs in the same key.

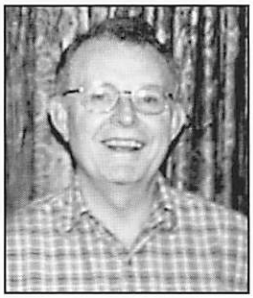
At the Bing on October 20th, in addition to the music, I plan to share with our audience some of my personal stories about Uncle Bing. The show will also feature slides and video vignettes of the period! As I said earlier, we are thrilled to be doing a tribute show to Uncle Bing, and while it will be impossible to completely do justice to his unequaled career in just two hours, we really hope to give the audience at least a good sampling of the music that made Bing Crosby the most successful, most admired, and most idolized entertainer of the 20th Century.

Howard Crosby

Hot Club of Spokane

Hot Club of Spokane's live music/documentary film experience, "Now You Has Jazz," which celebrates the Spokane roots of Bing, Mildred Bailey, and Al Rinker returns to the Bing Crosby Theater for an encore performance on December 6 at 7pm. Incidentally, Richard Baker has a review of the Hot Club's latest CD in *Keeping Track*.

Celluloid Crosby



I still enjoy watching Bing and Bob in the *Road* films. What I cannot understand is the excitement that preceded my every visit to the cinema to watch Abbott and Costello or Martin and Lewis. Their films remain the same but my enthusiasm is now in reverse gear. I will go out of my way to avoid seeing Bud and Lou or Dean and Jerry in full flow. Film historian Barry Forshaw expressed it well when he wrote: "Time, audience taste and the vagaries of critical fashion have a way of turning previously held judgements head over heels". He was revisiting the critical acclaim heaped on the 1933 film *Cavalcade*. I want to return to 1930 to examine how the opposite has happened to *King of Jazz*.

The review for "Variety" went: "*The King of Jazz* as directed by J. Murray Anderson on his first talker attempt cost Universal $2 million in his inexperienced hands. Nothing here counts excepting Whiteman, his band and the finale." Fast forward to December, 2013, when the U.S. Library of Congress announced the 25 films in their annual selection which would be preserved under the National Film Preservation Act. These films were added to the 625 already selected for placing on the National Film Registry as "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant." *King of Jazz* was recognised as "a sparkling example of a musical in the earliest days of two-strip Technicolor". And so we find Bing's first appearance on film joins the 2004 selection of *Going My Way* for the National Film Registry.

Whenever *King of Jazz* is preceded by the definitive "the", the pedant in me winces. You'll have noticed that the "Variety" review used it. So it came as a surprise to discover that when Paul Whiteman was signed for the film in October, 1928, it was then to be titled *The King of Jazz* with the intention of basing the movie on his life and career. But Whiteman was against any plot which smacked of backstage melodrama and after considerable

money has been spent on a story outline, a decision was taken in September of 1929 to make an all-star revue. $50,000 was then paid to acquire the rights to feature Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue".

Although a Universal Picture, it was billed as "A Carl Laemmle Production". Ogden Nash wrote the couplet: "Uncle Carl Laemmle, Had a very large faemmle" and this is evidenced by the appearance in the film of his niece Carla, who danced in the "Funiculi, Funicla" sequence. The implication is clear. Carl Laemmle made a habit of finding his relatives a place on the payroll at Universal Studios. I'm mentioning this because Carla Laemmle died on June I2th, 2014 at the age of 104. Until then she outdistanced Mary Carlisle by three years as a surviving presence in a Crosby film.

I have covered the film's production previously and most will have seen it on one of its several showings on television over the last forty years. Now I'm going to look at its journey to respectability from its cinema release in 1930 until it gained recognition by the U.S. Library of Congress. When it was premiered in London in 1930 the HMV store on Oxford Street devoted their main window display to the film. Universal Pictures provided a projector and slides which promoted the film were shown on a screen. In addition a static display advertised recordings by John Boles and the Paul Whiteman Orchestra plus other "actual artistes in the film" as being available within.

The Rhythm Boys and the Brox Sisters in the "Bench in the Park" sequence.

The 1930s was main decade for cinema building on an international basis. In the UK, film circuits were developed which eventually resulted in major towns having at least two movie houses branded Odeon, Gaumont or ABC. Independent operators also acknowledged that regular picturegoers were going to be around for a while, especially now that the talkies were no passing fad. In the winter during which the distribution of *King of Jazz* took place, several new cinemas in England selected that film to be their opening offer. This was a demonstration of the faith exhibitors had of the film being a crowd puller. Here is a sample of those picture houses which booked the film as their opening attraction:

13th October 1930 Regal, Corsham
8th December 1930 Odeon, Whalley Range, Manchester
14th February 1931 Plaza, Swansea
16th February 1931 Plaza, Exeter

The last named marked the reopening of what had been the Hippodrome cinema. It closed in order to be wired for sound and *King of Jazz* marked its introduction of talkies.

The general pattern of film exhibition outside London was for a film to play for six days beginning Monday. This allowed patrons to develop a weekly cinema-going habit. Only when film bookers felt certain that a longer run was viable was this practice varied. It is notable that Liverpool audiences had the luxury of seeing *King of Jazz* playing for a fortnight at both the Prince of Wales in the city centre and the Olympia in West Derby. This goes against the warning from the reviewer for 'Variety" whose views we opened with. The advice from that magazine was: "a box office picture anywhere for one week." That implied that word of mouth would see audiences diminishing following the film's initial opening.

It has to be acknowledged that in commercial terms "Variety" got it right After its first run the film was showing a loss on the books of Universal Pictures of $lmillion. This was as much to do with its extraordinary high production costs as it was to its ticket sales. Then, in 1933, Warner Bros. proved that there was still mileage in film musicals. They recorded a great financial success with *42nd Street.* This prompted studio head Carl Laemmle to orchestrate the rerelease of an edited version of *King of Jazz.* Some cinemas reported better business than on its initial 1930 run.

It can't be said that the re-issue of the film was down to Bing's blossoming popularity. Not until *Going Hollywood* (1933) could he be regarded as a name having any significant marquee value. As a semi-anonymous member of the Rhythm Boys his celluloid debut went unnoticed at the time. Although he was featured in fan magazines from the mid-thirties onwards Bing's earliest film performance was ignored. In this country general readers had to wait until the immediate

postwar years for *King of Jazz* to be highlighted as part of the Crosby filmography. This came about through a flimsy publication called "The Life of Bing Crosby". The author was Leonard Wallace, a contributor to the U.K. film trade journal "Kinematograph Weekly". He had been commissioned by publishers Muse Arts Limited to write about Bing in their one shilling Starlight Series. Wallace went back to Bing's film beginning and devoted considerable space to *King of Jazz*. For the first time the film-going fraternity was made aware of where it began for Crosby. There were a few forgivable mistakes in the narrative (birthdate given as 1901, *Pennies From Heaven* attributed to Paramount Pictures) but as an introduction to the life and film career of Bing up until his early forties it was a serviceable work. It held even greater appeal if the reader enjoyed purple prose. Here is how Bing met Dixie: "... when they were introduced, and their hands touched and their eyes met, they were just another boy and girl falling in love at first sight."

Fast forward eighty plus years and *King of Jazz* is here for all to see on DVD. It had made its home viewing debut earlier on VHS. That release was promoted as having the two-colour Technicolor process corrected to produce a more accurate blue tint. Purist pointed out that the film's original look was misrepresented. Fortunately a recent DVD issue returned to the original film stock and a French box set included it as an example of early Technicolor pleasures. That set also included the original U.S. trailer to the film. Sharp-eyed viewers can glimpse Bing if they don't blink. The trailer closes with Paul Whiteman almost filling the screen. And there in the background are the Three Rhythm Boys. Trailers are usually shown the week before a film is screened. So this would be the first time that almost everyone saw the face of the man who became the 20th century's foremost entertainer.

Keith Parkinson

High Tor

"High Tor," the rarely seen television movie from 1956, starring Bing and Julie Andrews was aired for the second time in perhaps 60 years at the Palisades Historical Park on Saturday, October 24th. (Interestingly, that day would have marked Bing and Kathryn's 58th wedding anniversary) The movie had been sitting in Bing's archives (read, his basement) since the 1950s. Joe Yransky, former film archivist for the New York Public Library, worked with Kathryn Crosby to present the film again (the only other time it had been shown was at the 2005 Bing Crosby film festival at Lincoln Center in New York City).

The film is the musical version of a 1937 play by Maxwell Anderson, and was filmed for the Ford Star Jubilee. It tells the story of Van Van Horn, the owner of High Tor Mountain in the Palisades of Rockland County, New York. In the movie, the Trap Rock Company wants to buy the mountain from Van Horn to mine the rocks. Van Horn does not care how much money they offer, the mountain is not for sale. The movie takes place over one night, while Van Horn is trapped on the mountain with two representatives of the Trap Rock Company. Also on the mountain, are the ghosts of Dutch settlors from the 1500s, who were abandoned by Henry Hudson. As the ghosts wait for their ship to return and take them back to Holland, some of them bedevil the two Trap Rock representatives, and the lone woman spends the evening talking and singing with Bing.

When Joe Yransky spoke with Kathryn about showing the film again, they originally talked about showing it in New York City. However, Kathryn thought it would be better to show it on the Palisades where it takes place. So, Joe worked with the Fort Lee Film Commission to air the movie at the Palisades Interstate Park, in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Kathryn was expected to attend, but unfortunately could not because she was under the weather.

More than 100 people attended the viewing, which was advertised only in the local paper. Bing's music filled the air from overhead speakers as we waited for the presentation to begin. People sang along to "Put it There Pal," and "White Christmas."

Bing and Julie Andrews in a dramatic scene.

The evening began with the Fort Lee Film Commission Executive Director, Tom Meyers, introducing the film and the work of the Commission. His first remark was that he is a huge fan of Bing Crosby, and with that he doffed a fedora reminiscent of

many Bing wore. He then explained that Fort Lee was the first home of the movie industry and so it was natural that the Fort Lee Film Commission was formed to commemorate that history. He then introduced Joe Yransky, who provided little known facts about the film.

Joe told us that, although Ford Star Jubilee was a live television show, Bing was wary of live television and wanted it filmed in 35mm instead. He also wanted it filmed so that it could later be released to theaters. He asked that it be filmed at RKO studios, which was near his dressing room on the Paramount lot, and near the golf links. After seeing Julie Andrews in "The Boyfriend," and listening to her music with his then fiancé, Kathryn Grant, he invited Julie to play the ghost of the Dutch woman. Therefore, *High Tor*, and not "Mary Poppins," marks Julie's first film appearance.

High Tor marked Bing's last role as the penniless, but happy, wanderer, ala *Pennies from Heaven*. Joe said that the film was well-received, but that one criticism was that Bing, at age 52, was getting too old to play these roles. Regardless of what the critics think, Bing looked his usual remarkably youthful self.

Although the film was prepared for a theatrical release, because it had been filmed in black and white to accommodate the only types of televisions available, the film never played in theaters because it was believed that the day of black and white musicals had passed.

Again, because it was filmed for television 60 years ago, the production values are not what we would expect today. Although the movie was set outdoors on a mountain, it was clearly not filmed outdoors. Nevertheless, the acting was excellent, the Dutch settlors' torment of the Trap Rock representatives was very funny, and Bing and Julie sang some beautiful numbers.

Much of the movie featured close-ups of whomever was speaking or singing. In answer to an audience question about this technique, Joe Yransky said that that was also a factor of the movie being shown on television, the largest of which at the time were usually 15 to 20 inches.

In all it was a great evening, and as we waited in line to be let in, Jane Stoutenborough, Judy Schmid and I were even able to educate people about Bing's legacy, and of course, Bing as a father.

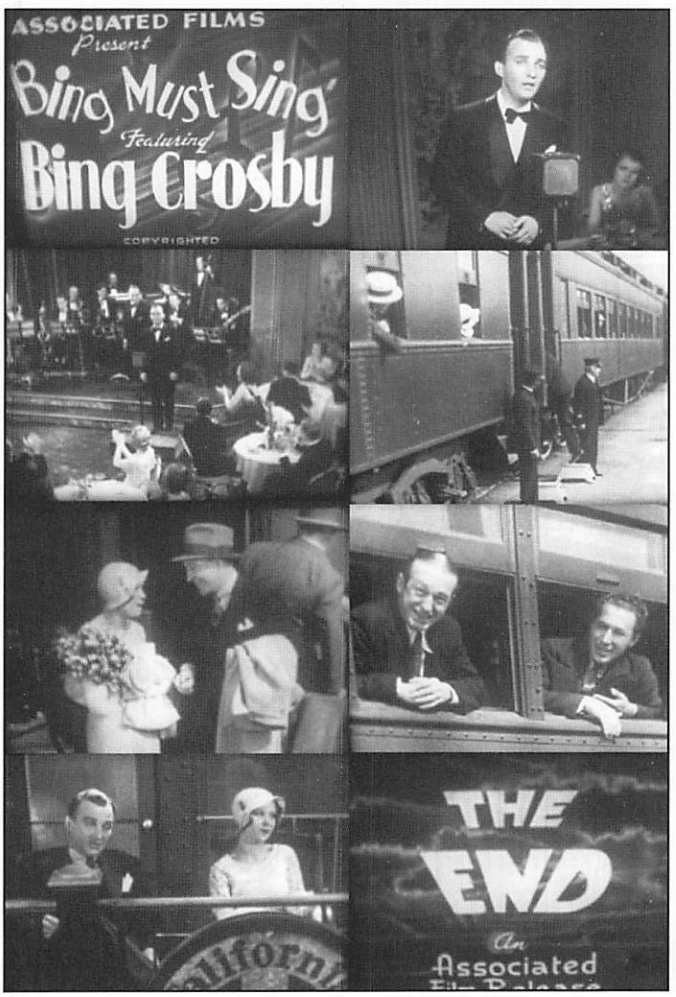
Sally Monaghan

Hitherto Unknown Bing Films?

Back in August, you editor had an email from a man called Phil in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. It read as follows:

> I am a film collector, and I recently acquired two Bing Crosby 16mm b&w films that don't appear on your list. In fact, I can't find any information concerning them on the web. Even the Wikipedia page on Bing's filmography fails to list them.
>
> The first is a 400-foot (one reeler). The only title card reads, "Associated Films Presents ***Bing Must Sing*** featuring Bing Crosby, Copyrighted."
>
> The second is also a 400-foot film. The only title card reads, "Associated Films Presents ***Tune In On Bing*** featuring Bing Crosby, Copyrighted."
>
> Both of these appear to be original prints on Dupont stock. My guess is they were produced in the late 1920s. It is possible these were re-released under a different name, but I kind of doubt it
>
> Let me know what you think.

Well, I had to admit that I had never heard of either of them. I wondered whether they might be abridged versions of the Sennett shorts but I asked for more details. Some days later, Phil sent me composite photos from the films and one of these is shown below and immediately solved the mystery.

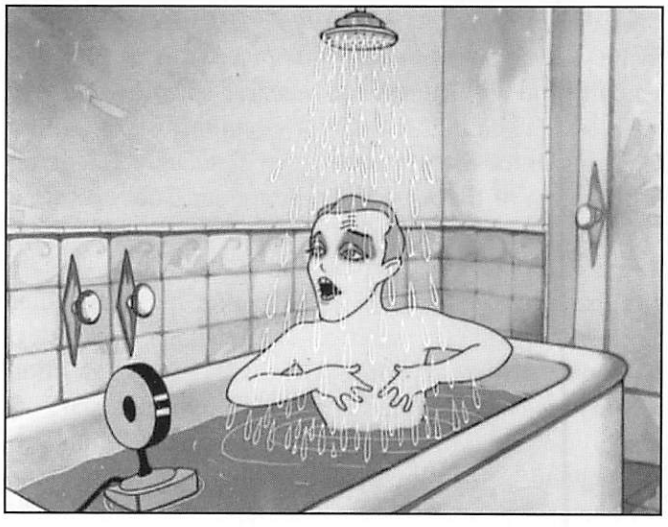


I was able to tell Phil that *Bing Must Sing* has photos from the Sennett short *Blue of the Night* and *Tune in on Bing* has photos from *Sing, Bing Sing*. Pity they weren't unknown films but perhaps there are still some hiding away in some attic.

Bert Bishop, by email from Chelmsford, Essex, UK

I have a box set of Busby Berkeley films and each DVD has extras, including cartoons.

On the ***Gold Diggers of 1933*** disc there is a cartoon entitled *I've Got to Sing a Torch Song*. Several film stars are caricatured including Bing. We see a glass panelled door marked Cros Bingsby Private. The camera enters and 'Bing' is in the bath covered in soap suds. He's singing 'Why Can't This Night Go on for Ever?'. He reaches for the shower head and washes off the suds, still singing. The sequence lasts for some twenty seconds.



On the ***Dames*** disc one of the cartoons is entitled *I Only Have Eyes for You*. In this sequence a cartoon bird, Katie Canary, is swooning over a radio listening to crooners on the airwaves. On the wall are 'photos' of crooners, including Bing. We see this image three or four times. There is dialogue over the voices coming from the radio so it's difficult to pick up a particular song.

Both cartoons are Warner Brothers Merrie Melodies.

A Note from Australia

Graham Pascoe writes from Bathurst, NSW, Australia:

Another splendid magazine issue had me wondering as I began to read the reprint of Gordon Vogt's article 'Songs of a Sunshine Salesman' because he questioned whether the reader would enjoy speculation. I did enjoy his thought-provoking contribution. Its origin from BINGANG reminded me that a branch of Club Crosby was commenced in Australia twelve years after its establishment in the USA in 1936. Barbara Doggett (now Barbara Woodfine) was president and she arranged for the copy of each issue of BINGANG received from USA to be retyped and reproduced, with an additional Australian branch section, for distribution to Australian (and later New Zealand) members.

Greg Van Beek gave us fascinating insights into the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club. How great it would have been to see Bing and Johnny Mercer perform 'Mr Crosby and Mr Mercer' (in blackface?). For some reason, their record of that song was not released in Australia until 1944, backed by another 'oldie', 'I Wonder What's Become of Sally', which Bing had recorded in 1941. Perhaps the delayed release of the duet was explained by the belief that Australians would not be familiar with the vaudeville original version. In fact, a record of 'Mr Gallagher and Mr Shean' by The Happiness Boys (Billy Jones and Ernest Hare) had become available on an Australian Brunswick disc in the late 1920s. The Crosby and Mercer record was 'a great bit of fun ... Johnny Mercer and Bing have a hell of a good time on this one' according to a review in the music magazine TEMPO in May 1944.

Like Keith Parkinson, I believe that *The Emperor Waltz* is one of Bing's most entertaining movies. It was well received by Australian audiences after its release here in July 1948. The aforementioned magazine TEMPO was plugging it for Paramount in April 1947 in an article titled 'Crosby says "He is not dead"' claiming Bing was denying rumours in circulation and mentioning his work on the film. (How desperate was the company for publicity and the magazine for copy?) A still of Bing and Joan Fontaine accompanied the article and the magazine's back cover was a full-page photo of Bing.

It screened at Sydney's Prince Edward Theatre, advertised as 'the most lavish entertainment you have ever seen in Paramount's 36 years of hit-making'. The review in The Sydney Morning Herald described the

film as 'an hilarious Technicolor comedy... [Bing was] gauche as a salesman who sings three quite indifferent songs'. It ran for five weeks. In Melbourne, the evening newspaper The Herald gave it a good review: 'The best Bing for many a day ... a lively, entertaining script ... the attractive, evergreen Bing ... sets the seal on a competent piece of absurdity.' Its run at Melbourne's State Theatre was four weeks but that was the nation's largest cinema with a seating capacity of 3339 patrons compared with the Prince Edward's 1391. As for the so-called 'indifferent songs', Bing's Decca recordings of 'Friendly Mountains' and 'Emperor Waltz' gave him a double-sided chart hit.

In an era when sales of sheet music were still important, the music for Strauss's 'Emperor Waltz' was available in two versions. The cover of one version was dominated by a photo of Bing in a sports jacket with the lyrics attributed on the second page to Evelyn Wales. The other version depicted a photo of Bing and Joan Fontaine and lyrics by Johnny Burke. Needless to say, the Australian sheet music for 'Friendly Mountains' and 'The Whistler and His Dog' featured pictures of Bing.

I've just read an interesting book *You Must Remember This: Life and Style in Hollywood's Golden Age* by Robert Wagner with Scott Eyman. (Published by Golden Age in 2014.) Needless to say, there are several references to Bing and despite the absence of Wagner's sources (although much is from his own recollections) he was able to write that Bing's golf handicap was 'precisely two' and that Bing was probably the best golfer of his generation (of the Hollywood colony). On page 201, one item of 'new' information which I've not seen reported elsewhere is that: 'In 1938, when a Triple-A franchise in the Pacific Coast League [a minor-league baseball league operating in the Western, Midwestern, and Southeastern United States] became available, Bob Cobb, [a prominent Hollywood restaurateur] invested in what would become the Hollywood Stars who were popular for years; he was joined in this venture by Bing Crosby [and other Hollywood notables who are named].'

British boxer Ricky Hatton has written a book (with Justyn Barnes) titled *Ricky Hatton's Las Vegas Tales*, published this year. I believe Hatton fought in that city. On page 10 he wrote 'Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Sammy Davis Jr and Liberace were being paid up to $50,000 per week back then in the fifties' to perform in Las Vegas. That was news to me and Malcolm Macfarlane has confirmed that Hatton and Barnes got it wrong. Bing did not perform in that city in the 1950s, but did in 1976. Just another example of something being attributed to Bing incorrectly, a not uncommon occurrence back in the days when Bing was a major force in entertainment.

The last couple of months have seen what are regrettably rare references to Bing Crosby in Australian media.

The great Cole Porter musical *Anything Goes* has been revived on stage in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney (the last at the famous Sydney Opera House) and patrons who bought the beautifully-produced program were able to see colourful reproductions of the posters which promoted the two movie versions of the play in which Bing starred.

On television, a two-part 'look at the life, music and career of the legendary entertainer, Frank Sinatra' titled *Sinatra: All or Nothing at All* was shown on the publically-funded Special Broadcasting System's number one channel at prime time on Sunday nights in September. Needless to say, references to Bing's influence on Frank were documented in Part one.

Coincidentally, when *Anything Goes* was playing in Sydney, a stage version of *High Society* was produced at a small venue in Sydney, and received splendid reviews.

Less appealing for Crosby enthusiasts was the reporting in the Sydney newspaper The Daily Telegraph of the death of the American entertainer Bobbi Kristina Brown. Titled 'Hollywood's bright stars stalked by tragic legacy', the article noted the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the deaths of other Hollywood notables such as musician Tim Buckley. 'Decades earlier, as Bing Crosby sold 300 million records and won acclaim from Life Magazine as "incontestably the No.1 Big Family Man of Hollywood", for the eldest of his seven children Christmas was more often black-and-blue than white. After Bing's death in 1977...Gary described both his parents as harsh and abusive disciplinarians in a 1983 memoir, Gong My Own Way'. It then noted the suicide deaths of Lindsay and Dennis and their allegations of

beatings by Bing. This August article was accompanied by a charming Crosby family photo taken in 1944.

As far as I know, the anniversary of Bing's death received no attention in the main media in Australia this year. What a contrast from 1977 when, for example, Melbourne's evening newspaper The Herald devoted almost its entire front page to the news under a headline in 2-inch block letters 'BING DIES'. Apart from a few small advertisements, the entire second page told the story of Bing's life and career under the heading 'Super crooner? Not me, I'm the groaner'.

Graham Pascoe

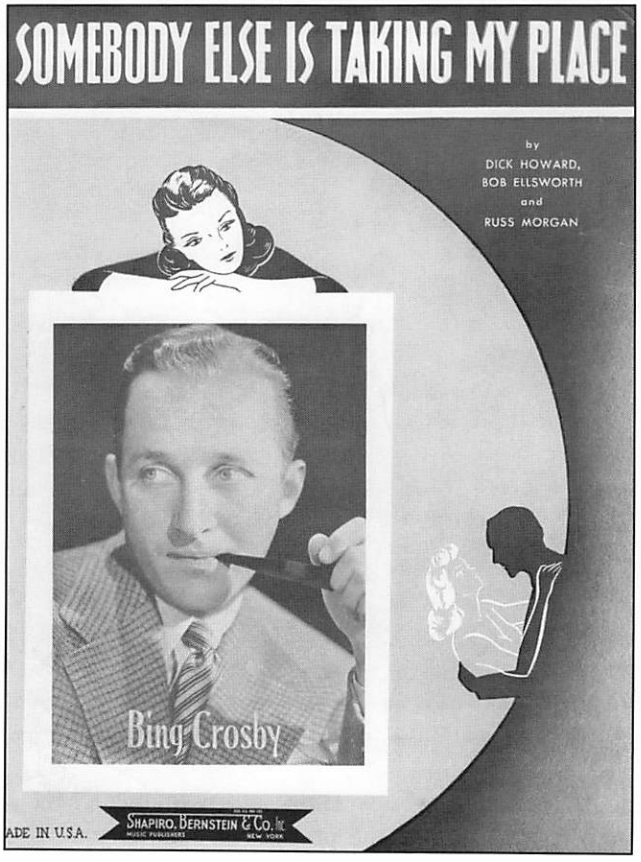
CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland remembers a very special Kraft Music Hall show.

One of the things that I love most about our hobby is the way that missing pieces in the collecting jigsaw can suddenly appear. It happened again just this week. Several years ago, when I was working on my biography of Bing's great disciple, Michael Holliday, a mutual friend put me in touch with a collector - Maurice Beardmore - who had been years ahead of his time. Back in the late Fifties when reel-to-reel tape recorders were the cutting edge of technology, he had modified his television so that he could make recordings direct to tape, without the then customary need to stand a microphone in front of the loudspeaker. His method produced better quality recordings and of course, eliminated any ancillary noise that the microphone might also collect.

Maurice's collection of tapes included some long lost audio soundtracks of Michael Holliday on British television. What I discovered on playing the tapes however was that they also contained a lot more. There was no way of making recordings other than sequentially so alongside the Holliday TV shows, there was audio of a great many other things, including the Perry Como TV shows as aired in Britain by the BBC. The shows in question were *Perry Como's Kraft Music Hall* which opened its doors on NBC-TV on September 30, 1959. Como had been one of the first singers to launch himself on television back in 1948 and his Chesterfield sponsored TV shows had been a regular feature on the American networks ever since. His move to Kraft however took things to a new level. His two-year deal, subsequently extended to four and more, had been announced in March 1959. Como would host 66 full-color shows over the two years and would be paid $25 million for his efforts, then the biggest ever television deal. In Britain, the BBC had already aired *The Perry Como Show,* but the new deal presented a problem because the name "Kraft" appeared in the show's title. American broadcasters had worked hand in hand with commercial sponsors since the dawn of time, but in Britain, at least on the BBC, naming a commercial company was akin to turning up at a vampire convention wearing a crucifix. Yvonne Littlewood, later to become one of the BBC's senior TV producers, recalled her first job at the Corporation being to go through the tapes of the Como shows and edit out every reference to Kraft. So, even the stentorian tones of Como's announcer, Frank Gallup, had to be edited so that over the opening credits, his welcome to "Perry Como's Kraft Music Hall" became simply "Perry Como's [muffled noise] Music Hall".

What has this to do with Crosbyana, I sense you asking? Well, Como was smart enough to surround himself with talented production staff and writers. He also had a sense of musical history. By the time he signed his deal with Kraft, the brand already had a long association with music - and of course, with Bing. The first Kraft sponsored programme on radio had first appeared back in 1933, called *The Kraft Program* and hosted by Bing's original mentor, Paul Whiteman. Bing took over in 1936 and stayed for 10 years leaving only because NBC refused his demands to be allowed to record the show rather than continue to broadcast live. It was the beginning of the end for Kraft on radio and although the Music Hall continued, the hosts who followed Bing were names such as Nelson Eddy and Al Jolson, singers whose careers were quite definitely moving towards the twilight side of the hill. Soon, Kraft took their sponsorship money to television but it was into drama rather music until the deal with Como saw the re-launch of the famous Music Hall.



Como, throughout his life, was steadfast in expressing his debt to Bing. "If it hadn't been for him, I'd still be cutting hair", was his standard line (he had started life as a barber) and he wasted no time in paying tribute to the man he was now succeeding. Maurice's tapes captured the moment when Como, on the first show, took his audience into what he called The Kraft Music Library, "the one room in the Hall that we are never gonna change." As he roots around the library, Como discovers an old wind-up gramophone. He puts the needle on the record and Bing comes to life, from KMH in 1942, singing "Somebody Else Is Taking My Place". And when the orchestral break comes around, Como himself picks up the vocal and ends in duet with Bing. It is a warm and loving tribute that I have played over and over, relying on my imagination to create the pictures of Como, his music library and the vintage record player.

Now, out of the blue, my imagination is redundant. I know Anthony DiFlorio only by reputation but I am deeply indebted to him. Every few weeks, his produces - from where, I know not - some previously unseen pieces of footage from Perry Como's television archive and posts them to YouTube. Last month, my eyes popped wide open when I checked his list of new posts and saw "Perry salutes Bing on KMH." And there it was, in grainy black and white rather than full-color, but at least it's there. It's a wonderful piece of television and you can see it on the internet at this location - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvJPEJvrlzY . The reason that it is grainy black and white is down to Como himself. Towards the end of his life, NBC asked him if he would accept the original color masters as they no longer wished to retain them. No, said Como, adding that the black and white kinescopes that he had were fine. As a result, the color masters were destroyed!

Perry finishes his duet with Bing.

The following year saw Bing return to the KMH as Como's guest. It was the product of a guest exchange deal between the two, which saw Perry fly to California in January 1960 to guest on Bing's TV show, with Bing returning the favour two months later. The two shows contained several duets between the two stars but the highlight was a long-player that they supposedly recorded on air, side one on Bing's show and the flip side on Como's. I look at this footage every few weeks because, in my view, Bing was never better than this on television. Loose, witty, energetic, in charge, clearly having a ball, it is impossible to take your eyes off him. Even Como feels the same, you can tell. He is quiet, understated and undeniably in awe of his duet partner, happy to be the permanent apprentice. The footage of the Music Library sequence from six months before complements the two later shows perfectly. As Bing finishes his 1942 rendition with its final lament that "somebody is taking my place", Como gently closes the lid on the player, replaces the trilby hat and pipe that sat on top and quietly sings "Nobody is taking your place". And nobody will. Watch and enjoy.

Ken Crossland **ken54@blueyonder.co.uk**

LEEDS 2015

Bob Halls sends his report on the 50th Annual Dinner/Meeting on Sunday 4th October.

Speaking to Michael Crampton before this, the 50th and last Leeds Meeting/Dinner of the International Club Crosby, he made reference to comments I had made in an email prior to the event that, 'It could be quite a sad occasion'. He also quoted that comment in his opening address to the meeting and making it clear that although it was sad the event was finishing, it was important that it be a celebration of 50 wonderful years at Leeds and that this final gathering should be a happy event.

These were wonderful and encouraging words from the man who has been at the forefront of these meetings for the entire period, starting in 1966, when Michaels's mum provided food for the assembled members, asking about two shillings each as a contribution.

I will just address members and readers who could not be at the event and sort of apologise for these minutes reflecting what was, rightfully a self-appreciating meeting, very geared up to those members who were there and those, particularly deceased members who have attended and contributed over the years. My intention is, to make the report interesting and readable, albeit much of the content reflects past and present attendees and recollections of the past. Only you can judge.

1. As with all the previous meetings/dinners, attendees were greeted by a selection of songs recorded by the man whose music and memory we try to keep alive, the one and only ***BING CROSBY!***

2. **Welcome – Michael Crampton**

As is customary and unfortunately more apparent as the years go by, members pass on and it's often really hard to stomach when some of those individuals were with us the previous year. Michael listed those who were no longer with us and we stood in silence to remember them.

Only last year, **Desmond and Belinda Hellier** were with us, despite Belinda being terminally ill and Desmond very ill and wheelchair bound. I mentioned them in last year's report and although Desmond couldn't communicate very well, I'll never forget the joy on his face and the excitement when he watched some old clips of Bing. Sadly, both passed away within a short space of each other and we all remembered them with warmth.

Then there was **Ken Barnes.** As reported earlier in this issue, we were all shocked and horrified to learn that the man, who was responsible for producing Bing's last recordings, as well as bringing Fred Astaire and Bing together again, had died from a massive heart attack. This was the man who held us spellbound last year and whom we shared dinner with, alongside his lovely wife. He was due to be with us again for our last meeting. My word, how we missed him. Members of the ICC attended Ken's funeral and many more of us would have liked to have been there. It was nice to see that *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* newspapers published obituaries of Ken after his death, which featured a photo of Bing with Ken during rehearsals for one of the albums.

So farewell you lovely and outstanding people, we are in your debt and we pray that you rest in peace. Perhaps even now, you are reunited with your musical hero! I really hope so!

Apologies and Special Welcomes

The list is long, but it was the final meeting, so bear with me.

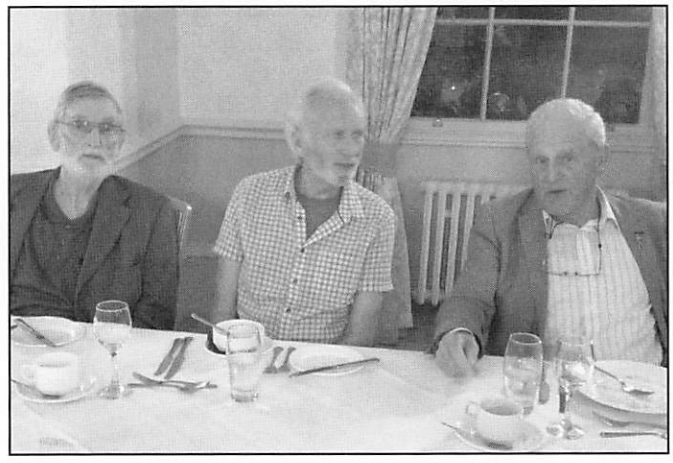
Members who sent their apologies were **Ken Crossland** away in Portugal, **Jason Liddiard** who may look to arranging a scaled down version of the meeting in the future. No details known at present, but the possibility of some members meeting up again may be welcomed.

Ken Shaw was with us in spirit and sent a great letter, which was read out and he sent a voucher for Perry Huntoon for some good English real ale which led Michael to produce a suitable brew for our revered member and speaker from the wilds of Chicago!

Bing's nephew **Phil Crosby Jnr** had also wanted to attend, as did **Renato Fallace**, our friend who travelled all the way from Brazil on previous occasions and **Gwen Harvey**, who telephoned Malcolm to say how much she missed the Leeds meeting nowadays.

Michael introduced a number of members who were attending for the first time, had travelled from abroad, or had returned to the meeting after not attending for some years.

David Currington, who travelled from down under in Sydney, Australia and who has done so much over the last few years to promote Bing in that part of the world, was warmly welcomed to this year's event.



David Currington (centre) discusses Crosby issues with Jim Reilly (left) and Colin Stewart at the gathering on the night before the main meeting.

Other welcomes and mentions were extended to **John Fahy** from Essex, **David & Mrs Groseman** from London, **Jennifer and Karen May** from across the Washington state in the USA, **Thomas and Mrs Hirschmann** from Salzburg in Austria, **Frans W. van der Kolff and Marjan Euser** from Apeldoorn, Netherlands, **Neil Perks & Barbara Harris** from Hollywood (that's the Birmingham one) who have just joined, **Geoff Vizard** from up there in Wigan, and **Keith & Kath Parkinson,** Michael thanking Keith for his wisdom and support over the years. Then there was **Jim Reilly** who was up front at the meeting for many years and **Nicholas Morrison** from Nottinghamshire. It was great to see **Ron & Anita Field** from Morton, Washington here again, especially after Ron's life threatening heart problems of last year. Stay in there Ron mate!

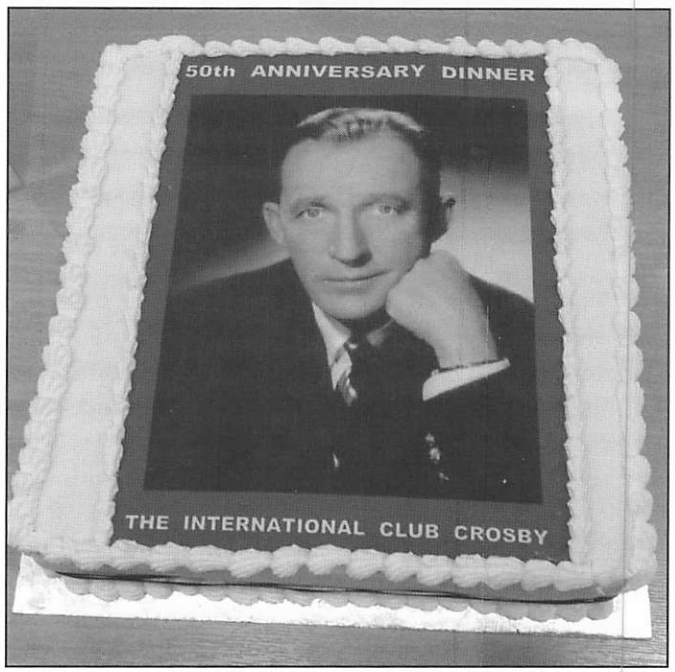
Of course this meeting would have been all the poorer had the next man not attended for the last bash, the one and only **George O'Reilly** from Dublin's fair city in the Emerald Isle. George is so respected and loved by the Bing gang! His infectious humour and wonderful recollections of his time as a personal friend and film producer for Bing are legendary and he didn't disappoint this year, recounting some of his personal experiences with Bing, including being the only friend actually invited to stay in Bing's home. We salute you George and you need to stay with us for many more years, as you are one of the few remaining links to the man himself. Take care and stay well!

I lost track of who suggested it, was it **George Patmore,** who asked for all in attendance to stand up and introduce themselves, so everyone had an

opportunity to put a face to the name. What a success that was! A great idea and well received I think.

The list continues; please skip the pages if you are getting bored! Credit was also, quite rightly extended to **Pat and Judith,** Malcolm and Michael's wives, for as Michael put it, 'putting up with two men with an obsessive hobby' over the years'. My second half would have surely left me and returned to her native Belgium in disgust!

He also thanked **Malcom Macfarlane** for all he has brought to the club and in particular the wonderfully edited and presented magazine and informative books published over the years relating to Bing Crosby. There's plenty more from Malcolm in the report, but needless to say, the applause was enthusiastic across the floor!



Mavis Heason's wonderful cake.

The most delicious and stunning anniversary cake suddenly materialized, with a photo of Bing covering the surface. This was made and presented by **Mavis and Ken Heason**, with the colour photo colorized from a black and white photo by **Jon Oye**. All participants enjoyed a piece, some of us a second piece. Funny really, I was sitting with **Jeremy Rose** and I commented that, not only am I the club custodian of Crosby's hat and one of his pipes, but looking at my segment of cake, I realized I was also consuming the end of his nose. Are there any experiences not to be had when you are a member of the ICC !!!!!!!

Michael also made reference to a previous Leeds anniversary cake, which after a guess the weight quiz, was won by a visiting George Formby fan, who apparently declined to share it on the day and took it away to one of his Formby gatherings. Say no more!

Jeremy Rose also featured in Michael's roll of honour, Michael's words 'Jeremy really helps the club'! He left it there and so will I. Thanks were, as always extended to the global team of **David, Greg and Wig,** who also have contributed so freely over the years.

Which just leaves 'yours truly' and it's only because Jeremy insisted I put it into the report that it's here, but thanks to Michael for his encouraging words about my Leeds reports over the last few years. I won't go into detail!

Michael's address was brilliant and highlighted the passion he has shown for the club for so long and since he joined in 1957. He finished with tributes to some of the Bing royalty, for want of a better term, who have graced the halls of the Leeds venues over the years, including **Alan Fisher,** Bing's butler, who he described as wonderful man. **Ken Barnes** of course and Bing's bookkeeper **Mozelle Seger.**

Reg Bristo, a legendary club man, whose speeches were epic and of course **Malcolm** again, Michael congratulating him on his series of Crosby and other artist presentations aboard P&O liners of late. Apparently he even does a talk on Elvis Presley!

Michael Winspear managed to leap from his chair before anyone else to propose a round of applause for Michael. Well done Mr Winspear, you are evidently sprightlier off the mark than us young upstarts!

My biggest surprise came when individual packs were handed out, apparently Michael's brainchild, which included a vast array of Bing goodies, including a commemorative CD and DVDs, vouchers and attendance lists and a souvenir programme, **Colin Pugh's** book 'Alternative Bing Crosby', a Roy Chappell record with Roy and Bing on the cover sleeve and a laminated copy of the poster 'I've Got the Girl'. I can't imagine how long it took to compile all this! Great work and much appreciated.

So, onwards and upwards and I have only reached number 3 on the programme. I think the editor may need to consider a separate edition, or supplement, just for Leeds! However, after Michael advised us how much the magazine printing costs are, I think that most unlikely. **That's a discreet plug by the way for club funds. Donations donations donations and purchase all available ICC merchandise. This magazine is unequalled, but it is expensive to prepare! Let's keep it viable!**

3. **Messages from Bing 1977 – His last before his death**

The following relate to two taped messages from Crosby in October 1977, one to the club in general and the other specifically to the Leeds meeting of that year. John Bassett and Wally Oldfield had visited Bing at his flat on October 6 and recorded the messages. They are very poignant and come just a short time before the ICC and all Bing Crosby fans reeled in horror and despair as a Madrid golf match became our worst nightmare! Read on!

Bing at the time of this message was performing at

the London Palladium and on the day of the recording was suffering from a head cold, but he still went on with the show that night, with his wife Kathryn popping out mid performance with medication for his throat. After the usual greetings to the club, the message is as follows;

He talks warmly about his annual Christmas Show due to be screened that year.

"We receive a cable from a long lost relative of the Crosby family, with an invitation to the family to a castle near London. We arrive at this beautiful home and the door is opened by Stanley Baxter playing the butler Hudson. He also plays the parts of Mrs Bridges and Rose and he runs the house with lots of jokes and songs. Ron Moody is Sir Percival Crosby and apparently the house is haunted by a long dead court jester who passed away in the house.

Stanley Baxter also appears as Bob Hope. Then we have Twiggy a singularly appealing young lady and a lot of charm, however she will never get rid of that cockney accent. She's a good little actress, knows her lines, always on time. There's the Trinity Boys' Choir, a remarkable choir and a special added guest, Mr David Bowie, who you might think is strange appearing with an ancient like me in a programme to celebrate Christmas. He is always known for hard rock, one of the best. He and I sing a duet and he sings a solo and I think he's just wonderful and a very nice man.

We are going home now, but I'll stop off in Spain for a little shooting and golf.

At home we are doing a show produced by Hemion and Smith, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Kraft Cheese Corporation, but I have to be back here for the 21st for the Queen's Jubilee, a massive production. Lord Grade was telling me the other day that the cast includes every important person I've ever heard of. Bob Hope is going to be the compere, but I don't think he can stay in his chair that long. I'll probably have to help him up. It's gonna be a big show and gonna raise a lot of money. Then we'll make a television show which will be shown all over England and the USA.

I've been playing a little golf, despite my little accident. I'm just hitting the ball easy. I have to walk four miles a day, that's part of the therapy and it's a lot less boring if you role a ball along the ground. So that's why I play golf. This afternoon I found myself afflicted by a head cold and I have a show to do a show tonight and I don't know how that is going to come out.

I want to wish all of you the best and greetings of the season and for the year to come. England is still my favourite country and my favourite town is London. So I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a very prosperous and successful New Year."

The second message to the Leeds Meeting goes as follows;

"Hello this is Bing Crosby, John Bassett was up here and asked me to tape a greeting to all the group gathered there at the Crosby International Meeting up at Leeds. I wish I was there with you, but hope my greetings will suffice and hope everybody has a good time at this very important function and hope to hear from you later. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Always your friend Bing Crosby."

4. **Bing at the Palladium – October 1977**

This was mentioned in the last section, but Malcolm played a recording of Bing singing on the night of October 7, one of which was 'The Way We Were' and his voice was pretty good, despite the sore throat.

Many of the club members were at the Palladium performances, some I am assured attending all of them! I was just a young police officer at the time and not aware of the club, or the day to day activities of Bing. A state of affairs which has left me wishing...if only! I had no idea he would soon be gone and I missed the opportunity of seeing him in the flesh. A great regret!

5. **The Final Days (Brighton 10th October 1977)**
Last Radio Broadcast (11th October 1977)
Golf in Spain & Death Announcement (14th October 1977)

Bing performed at Brighton on the 10th October, his last performance and he met Gracie Fields. Malcolm showed an overhead of a photo of a plaque dedicated to Bing at Brighton.

Then on the 11th October he was interviewed by Alan Dell. He commented that 'It's pleasant to be on this Network, the BBC' and mentioned previous interviews, one with Pete Murray, but this was the first hour-long music performance. He also introduced his song 'Feels Good Feels Right'.

Bing jetted off to Spain the next day and on October 14th had a successful round of golf, walked round the green, commented on the day's golf and collapsed and died.

Then came the newsflash all around the world **'BING CROSBY DIES ON A GOLF COURSE IN MADRID'.** The BBC interrupted programmes to announce the death and referred to him as 'a huge star'. What an understatement, as we shall see later in this report! I have spoken to ICC members at length about this time and the effect the news had on them as individuals. Some just cracked up when they related their own experiences on the day. A current recurring theme was one of absolute shock and a time when everyone concerned knew exactly what they were doing at the time and where they were. Some cancelled everything and took the day off work. I personally refused to believe it and didn't want to believe it. This man had been such an influence on my life at a difficult time when I was very young, his music a reassuring presence during dark moments. But that's another story.

6. **So Long Bing**

Malcolm had prepared an overhead presentation for this and all other sections, with appropriate music and photographs of the funeral and those gathered. This musical tribute brought a lump to the throat and one line from the vocal by J. J. Barrie just summed it up for me. **'So long Bing, you made the Christmas sleigh bells ring'.** I'll leave it there!

7. **Bing – The most important entertainer of the first part of the 20th Century.**

Malcolm's next offering highlighted just why the above statement is true, with a list of Bing's achievements. Malcolm made it clear that these things are often overlooked and that Bing is now the 'Forgotten Man'. A young person's quote recently was 'who is Bing Crosby, he sang with David Bowie didn't he'? If that's all, then we really need to continue promoting Bing's music and memory, so that his name is synonymous with that of Sinatra. The following is a straight lift from Malcolm's presentation;

Who was he?

First full-time vocalist with an orchestra.

More studio recordings than anyone (about 400 more than Frank Sinatra).

Made the most popular record ever, "White Christmas".

His recording career

Had 396 charted records. Compared with Sinatra (209), Elvis (149), The Beatles (68).

Had most number one hits ever, 38, The Beatles (24), Elvis (18).

His movie career

No. 1 box-office attraction 5 times (1944-48). In the top ten of box-office stars 15 times.

Nominated for an Academy award for best actor 3 times and won for *Going My Way.*

And on radio

Major radio star longer than any other performer – 1931-1962. About 3470 radio broadcasts.

Driving force behind the use of tape for recording radio shows.

Bing the sportsman

Created the first and longest-running pro-am golf championship, raising millions for charity.

Central figure in the development of the Del Mar racetrack.

Part owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team for many years.

8. **Leeds 1966–2015 – A Tribute to Michael Crampton and all those who have attended over the years.**

Now if there was ever an appropriate tribute, it is to our excellent and long serving Secretary and Treasurer, Michael. This Bing Crosby stalwart, who met and had drinks with Bing during his lifetime, has co-ordinated the Leeds gatherings since 1966 to the present day, 2015! This is a phenomenal feat of endurance and service to the club and Crosby's memory.

Again the section will be quite self-indulgent and I am aware that much of what is to come will be, in some ways irrelevant to overseas readers, or new members. But this presentation by Malcolm was something quite special and after reading through volumes of past BING magazines, so many names seen on those pages came to life and as this is the last gathering, it seems right to bring them back and join the present.

The presentation was an overhead myriad of past Leeds meetings, right up to last year and I am going to list an array of names of key club members, many of whom are no longer with us.

Bing's music played almost hauntingly through this passage of old photographs and videos and must have affected some of our older attendees quite significantly, as memories from the past appeared on the screen.

First up was an image of Michael's letter confirming him as a member of the club in 1957 and then a copy of a page from BING #4 (October 1966) in which Michael announced the first Leeds meeting which referred to him as **'British correspondent Michael Crampton'**. All very grand!

The images rolled on and extremely young looking Mr & Mrs Cramptons graced the screen, a full dark beard which matured to a graceful grey over the years. That's Michael by the way, not Judith!

Images followed of an even younger looking **Ken Crossland**, legends like **Frank Murphy, Reg Bristo, Ken Barnes and Michael's mum.** The venue moved to the Mansion Hotel in Leeds in the 70s, and we saw a video from 1990 of the fated anniversary cake which fled to a George Formby gathering, with an address from Michael, delivered with the same passion we see today.

Another legendary figure and close friend of Bing, **Leslie Gaylor** was seen speaking at the meeting. How pleased was I last year when I aggressively outbid other members for some of his memorabilia of Crosbyana!

The faces continued to roll across the screen, with the lovely and much missed **Arnold Pope** delivering his yearly Bing Quiz. **George Smith and Charlie Tupper** appeared, then **Carol & Bob Jones, John Joyce, Lionel Pairpoint,** another huge influence on the club. **Ralph Harding, Ron Bosley, Jim Reilly,** Bing's butler **Alan Fisher,** a very popular visitor and speaker at Leeds, who was very well received. **Michael O'Toole, Mozelle Seger** and Bing's niece **Carolyn Schneider,** prolifically writing books on life with her Uncle Bing.

Radio Cumbria came a few years ago, with many of our members interviewed for a live programme, including **Malcolm, Michael, Ken Crossland, and Bert Bishop.** How I love Bert and I thank him for making me feel so welcome since I joined, along with the late **Wally Oldfield,** one of the last members to have an audience with Bing and who mesmerized me with his stories on my first Leeds attendance.

Coming into the last decade, I could relate to all of the sequences and photos, with me appearing, looking rather old, I thought. Nothing like a photo to show the truth! A highlight was when **Judith Crampton** realized Michael had bid for and won a singing Bing doll. The photo revealed her horror, if looks could kill!

Then of course there were photos of many of the gathering wearing Bing's hat and holding one of his pipes, a very popular episode indeed. When I was nominated by Michael to become custodian of the hat, which was originally given to the club by **Kathryn Crosby** at the Hillsborough home and also when **George Patmore** offered to send me the pipe as well, I couldn't believe it. I was the temporary owner of something personal to my childhood hero. Many people might laugh that off, but not me!

Ken Barnes appeared on many of the photos, including last year's event and I think we all felt very sad. But sad we were not when **Perry Huntoon's** image and presentation appeared, because it led into Part two of his presentation of Bing's ladies of Song.

The group photo of those attending the last Leeds meeting.

9. Perry Huntoon – Bing and his Ladies of Song (Part 2)

Perry is a renowned globetrotter and I may venture that, he may, I say, may have consumed a beer in every conceivable corner of the World! One thing is for sure, the depth of his knowledge in this music genre is unsurpassed and I just love following his exploits on Facebook, across the globe, photographs usually including a glass of beer and a very pretty young lady! What exactly is your secret charm Mr Huntoon?

Perry's presentation was accompanied by recordings of the songs listed and overheads from Malcolm, showing the specific ladies singing with Bing, plus bits of memorabilia associated with the song. It's interesting this, for Perry actually choose my favourite song by Bing, his duet from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* with Rhonda Fleming. It was also the clip I chose for the movie presentation which is featured later in the report. Apparently Rhonda's singing received little acclaim, but I thought she sung beautifully. But what do I know! So the next bit is again a direct lift, this time from Perry's notes, which I begged him for well in advance of the event.

> **Rhonda Fleming** *Once and For Always (12/18/47).* From the film "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court," this tune was written by Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen who were long time collaborators with Bing. Bing also recorded a solo version of this tune nine days later and considered a much better version. Frankly, Rhonda's acting ability was better than her singing talent. Perhaps the lack of warmth is reflected by the movie scene in which it was sung, being imprisoned in a dungeon while awaiting transportation.
>
> **Evelyn Knight** ***Everywhere You Go*** *(3/18/49).* A popular singer of the 1940s, Evelyn had two big hits in 1948 with *"A Little Bird Told Me"* and *"Powder Your Face with Sunshine."* This 1927 song, was well-arranged and orchestrated by Vic Schoen who provided the backing for most of the Bing/Andrews Sisters duets. Evelyn and Bing contrast nicely on this tune. Guy Lombardo had a minor hit with this song.

Carole Richards *Sunshine Cake (5/10/49.)* Another Burke and Van Heusen song, this was the big successful song from the film *"Riding High"* that Bing made with Coleen Gray. Earlier, Carole had won a Bob Hope talent contest, moved to Hollywood and appeared on numerous TV shows. She is best remembered for her duet with Bing on *"Silver Bells."* Bing liked this novelty song well enough to include it in his autobiography album a few years later.

Dorothy Kirsten *Accidents Will Happen (4/11/50.)* Yet another Burke and Van Heusen tune, this was written for the film "*Mr. Music."* Dorothy was a soprano who sang with the Metropolitan Opera for 30 years beginning in 1945. Bing, quite frankly, never sounded totally at ease with operatic styled singers. While the performances by both are quite decent on this song, Bing recorded it again two months later in a much finer solo version.

Patty Andrews *If I Were a Bell (9/7/50).* Patty, of course, was the lead singer of the famous Andrews Sisters trio. She recorded three times as a solo with Bing and made many recordings in the 1950s after the sisters split up. This is a Frank Loesser song from *Guys and Dolls.* With their great familiarity together, Bing is able to ad-lib a bit with Patty responding appropriately. Frankie Laine had a minor hit with this and Joe Williams & Sarah Vaughan made a fine duet recording with the Count Basie band a decade later

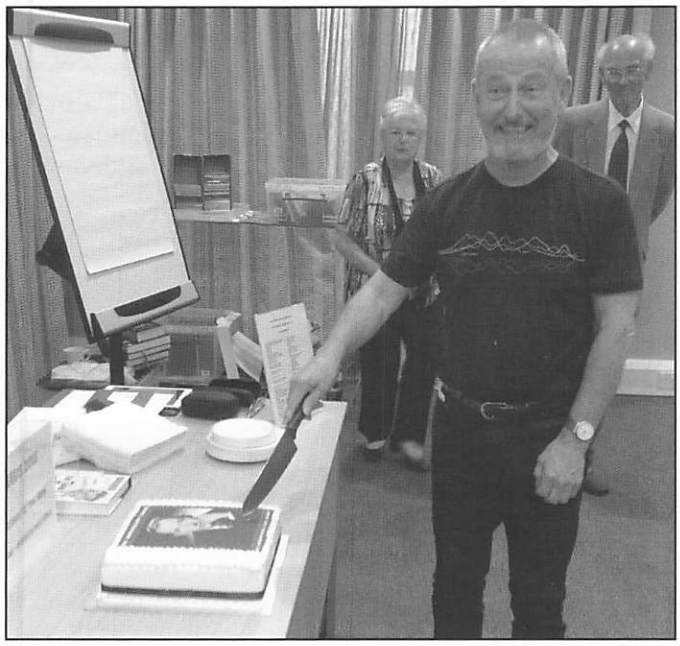
Jane Wyman *In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (6/20/51).* From the film "*Here Comes the Groom,"* this Hoagy Carmichael/Johnny Mercer collaboration was a hit and won an Oscar for best film song. This was Jane's first recording effort and the backing by Matty Matlock's All Stars, which featured Red Nichols, is superb. Frankie Laine & Jo Stafford also made a duet version of the tune.

Peggy Lee *Watermelon Weather (5/16/52)* Another Hoagy Carmichael song is featured on Peggy Lee's recording debut with Bing. She had recently ended a Capitol contract and Decca signed her up and quickly paired her with Bing. She had appeared on his radio show previously after having gotten recognition as the singer with Benny Goodman's band in the early 40s. Perry Como and Eddie Fisher also recorded this tune together.

Rosemary Clooney *Fancy Meeting You Here (8/7/58).* Rosie, of course, needs no introduction. Malcolm and Ken Crossland have written a fine biography of her ("*Late Life Jazz*") in which they refer to her as "arguably the most versatile popular singer in history." They made two albums together, both backed by Billy May. On the first album, the title tune is by Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen and offers a light hearted bantering approach that reflects the nature of the entire album.

The Cutting of the CAKE (not on programme)

Ah the cake, the cake! What can I say, but wonderfully made, delicious and a joy to eat Bing's nose! Well done **Mavis Heason and Jon Oye,** an absolute masterpiece! However I don't know about Michael looking very Celtic warrior sort of aggressive, suddenly emerging from the fray with a huge carving knife, shouting '**Who hasn't paid'.** All very unseemly I fear!



Michael cuts the cake watched by Mavis Heason and Trevor Wagstaff.

Auction of Memorabilia (again not on the programme)

This always goes down well, with Malcolm doing his 'I wish I was an auctioneer' act! Been watching too much 'Bargain Hunt' possibly! That for overseas readers is a UK programme featuring antiques. Anyway, after much aggressive persuasion and making everyone feel guilty if they didn't contribute enough to club funds, Malcolm managed to extract the following from our closely guarded purses and wallets.

£100 was paid for a set of rare V Discs and £40 for rare Australian LP's, both donated by Ken Crossland, a 'Riding High' poster for a pound, various books Bing related, which accumulated nearly £70, a box of Old Masters for £5 and 13 Jonzo LP's.

Seriously, Malcolm is really good at this!

10. Highlights from the Greg Van Beek years

Another person who is a great influence on the club is **Greg Van Beek** over in the States. His weekly radio broadcasts feature Bing as a centre piece and he is a key figure in keeping Bing's memory alive. He also contributes to the BING magazine and in the last few years, has contributed a great deal of sometimes rare material for our Leeds meetings. Again, this being the final meeting, Malcolm wanted to show a series of excerpts Greg has forwarded to us. For this section we were treated to the following performances from Bing and other notable celebrities;

A Cockeyed Optimist – The Whiffenpoof Song – Dardanella (with Louis Armstrong) – The Men in My Little Girl's Life – Medley with Johnny Mercer – Where the Rainbow Ends – Sing Soft, Sing Sweet, Sing Gentle (with Durante) – Both Sides Now – Medley with Peggy Lee – Love's Been Good to Me – Girl Talk (with Diahann

Carroll & Joey Heatherton) – Little Green Apples – Medley with Ella Fitzgerald.

Many thanks Greg, we are in your debt and as I said, a great pity we couldn't get you to Leeds. I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say you would have been a very welcome guest.

Well dear reader, you are now either sound asleep in your chair, bored out of your mind, or you are ready for a break, so let's have dinner!

As usual the dinner was a lively affair with members flying round the tables taking photos and getting in the waitresses' way! Everyone keeping to a strict low calorie diet of rather delightful healthy soup, or salads and fish, followed by a gut busting roast and desserts loaded with full fat cream. I'm actually now a cardiac rehabilitation trainer and 7 days of eating that lot would probably have doubled my monthly referral quota of heart attack survivors!

11. **International Pro-Celebrity Golf excerpts** (15 minutes)

In 1976 the BBC and presenter Peter Alliss delivered some quite interesting Pro-Am golf matches and the 'Old Groaner' was featured in two matches partnering professional golfer Johnny Miller against Tony Jacklin and celebrities Sean Connery and Bruce Forsyth. Bing's pairing lost both matches, but Bing was featured playing some pretty impressive shots, and he holed one long putt any golfer would have been proud of.

Peter Alliss, completely star struck, swooned over Bing with a string of 'I love you Bing' comments, such as 'The greatest of them all, the Old Groaner, Bing Crosby' and 'The one and only Bing Crosby, with his trusty gem putter and his loose swinging swing', whatever that may mean! Then almost bowing before him, 'Bing hits the ideal shot', 'Beautifully timed shot' and 'Brilliant putt Bing'. What a charmer from Alliss, looking about ten stone lighter than today.

The crowd obviously agreed with Alliss and Bing gave a respectful bow and a little dance after a particularly long putt. Crosby, it seemed was quite admiring of Sean Connery's game, but then he would, after all, he was playing with the famous James Bond!

12. **The Best of Bing at the Movies**

One of the highlights of day, both this year and previous years, was when we were treated to a DVD compiled by Malcolm of two hours of film clips, all blending into a magnificent series.

As I said, I chose the clip from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and I just love watching Rhonda Fleming in this clip. She was just stunning in my view. Not sure about Bing's outfit though!

So here is the list of songs featured on the DVD. How many of them can you put to the film?

Music Hath Charms – Auf Wiedersehen, My Dear – Every Time My Heart Beats – Where the Blue of the Night – Learn to Croon – Temptation – May I – With Every Breath I Take – Down by the River – I Wish I Were Aladdin – Empty Saddles – So Do I – Pennies from Heaven – Let's Call a Heart a Heart – Blue Hawaii – Sweet Leilani – It's the Natural Thing to Do – All You Want to Do Is Dance – The Moon Got in My Eyes – Sing a Song of Sunbeams – Too Romantic – Rhythm on the River – Wait Till the Sun Shines Nellie – White Christmas – Be Careful It's My Heart – Moonlight Becomes You – If You Please – Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral – That Old Black Magic – Welcome to My Dream – All By Myself – You Keep Coming Back Like a Song – Blue Skies – A Couple of Song and Dance Men – Friendly Mountains – The Kiss in Your Eyes – You Don't Have to Know The Language – Once and for Always – Busy Doing Nothing – Some Place on Anywhere Road – De Camptown Races – In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening – Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep – The Search Is Through – True Love – Now You Has Jazz.

The End Bit

So the final Leeds Meeting/Dinner came to an end with Michael, without carving knife this time, jumped up and shouted 'You still haven't paid me,' so I hope everybody did, as he had to pay the full dinner bill that night.

It did not go unnoticed that, on quite a few occasions during the meeting, the Weetwood Hall Conference Room lights kept flickering and the dimmer switch seemed to be having a bad hair day. Or as one member suggested, it might just have been one or more of those dearly departed members, or even Bing himself, just reminding us that they were in fact with us. Well I'm not going to argue with that!

Well as I said at the start of the report. Much of this was quite self-indulgent and I make no apologies for that, but I sincerely hope that I have given you an overview of the final meeting and that you haven't been too bored. If you have, don't worry, it's the last one!

This was an occasion when members came together as regular attenders, returnees and new members to the club, to celebrate the last 50 years and to remember those who have given so much to making the venture a success and keep Bing Crosby in the limelight. Images passed across the screen and memories came flooding back of dear people who were regarded as friends in a common cause.

I felt that those people were brought back for the day, becoming part of the present and alive again. The common bond of, not hero worship, but a deep love of a man and his music, spanned over 50 years and it brought us together as one, as the past collided with the present.

Fifty years is a long time and with the skill and dedication of all those mentioned and those not, particularly Michael and Malcolm, we have been privileged to experience some wonderful and fulfilling occasions and I think Bing would have been proud of

these passionate people, had he lived.

Inevitably Bing Crosby and the Crooning age will eventually fade into the mists of time, as will the memory of those promoting this icon, I feel we have done our best and that's all we can do.

Both the ICC and the magazine will continue unabated and hopefully future gatherings may emerge within the membership in some form or other, who knows and watch this space!

From a personal perspective, it has been a privilege to meet with so many lovely people on a yearly basis and it's those people, ordinary people who will still keep Bing's music in the public domain, even if it is primarily at Christmas time.

So Michael, I promised to celebrate the occasion in the report and I hope I have, but I'm afraid you are going to have to permit me to say that I felt just a little sad when I returned to my hotel room after the meeting had ended and I would venture to suggest that, I was not the only one.

Oh I forgot, the meeting unanimously agreed to set the yearly subscriptions at £20. About four pints of beer in today's money!

Bob Halls

Editor: Thanks, Bob, for your usual tour-de-force. I felt guilty asking Bob to do the report because he just couldn't sit back and enjoy the meeting like the rest of the audience but he was happy to undertake the task. I thought that this was a very special gathering and I was quite moved at the end when everyone linked arms as Bing sang "Auld Lang Syne" before the usual rendering by him of "A Perfect Day".

Many members wrote expressing their thanks and I've picked a couple of letters at random.

Frank Startup: Apologies that this is a couple of weeks after the event, but I wanted to thank you and Michael for an excellent day in Leeds earlier this month. It was wonderful to spend some extended time among interesting people with whom I share an enthusiasm - although enthusiasm is putting it mildly.

The presentations were fascinating, and I have re-played the collection of musical clips with great pleasure. The 'goody bag' was a great idea and will provide a memento of this and past gatherings: the CD is already a fixture in my car.

I hope the hint that there might be future gatherings at another venue becomes more than a hint, in which case, I will look forward to meeting you again soon.

Incidentally, I don't know whether or not I was one of those members who neglected to reply to the issue of raising subscription levels, but, for the record, as far as I'm concerned, you can quadruple them - I'm in!

Cliff Simmonds: Many thanks to you and Michael and all who contributed to the final meeting in Leeds.

It was a great pleasure to be in the company of these ardent fans and to see so many younger people there. The programme was excellent and a fitting tribute to this modest man who brought so much joy and romance into the lives of people all over the world. The team must have put a lot of thought and effort into making the meeting so special and it was great to be given those brilliant DVD's as a permanent reminder of the occasion.

I would like to have had more time to talk to other members, particularly David Currington, but there was always so much happening it was not possible.

There was sadness in the goodbyes this time. My daughter who always drove me to the meetings, felt it too. We will miss you all, but will keep in touch as much as we can. There is a line in one of the old songs which says "the song is ended but the melody lingers on". I think that is a good way to end this letter.

BING ON THE BOX

Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

Crosby films and other items seen on TV since last time include:

Alias Jesse James	TCM
Going Hollywood	TCM
The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad	TCM
Pennies from Heaven	GetTV
The Big Broadcast of 1936	TCM

Jon Oye and Judy Schmid tell me that after *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* was shown, there was a nice mention by Leonard Maltin of the significance of Bing's involvement in the Ichabod segment. Maltin talked about Bing being the top of his craft - Oscar winner with a string of hit movies, a string of hit records, and a very popular radio show. He said that it was a 'coup' for Disney to get Crosby for this terrific cartoon.

USA & Canadian Radio

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series *Nostalgia*

Radio Time on 1420 AM WJUB has continued its long run on Saturday nights starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET). Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long broadcast and in addition on August 15 he used highlights from the Command Performance Victory Extra show on the surrender of Japan as VJ Day was remembered. On September 12, Greg mounted a tribute to the late Ken Barnes playing various tracks by Bing ("That's What Life Is All About", "The Good Old Times", "A Couple of Song and Dance Men", "Seasons") as well as songs from Ken's albums with Fred Astaire and Johnny Mercer.

On October 10, Greg marked the 38th anniversary of Bing's passing with the BBC radio special that was recorded just three days before Bing's death on October 14, 1977. The hour long program was a joint effort with Rosemary Clooney and was heard with only slight edits. Then to celebrate the 200th weekly episode of Greg's NRT show, his very special guest for the entire hour was the legendary Pat Boone. Pat was the second biggest charting artist of the late 1950s, behind only Elvis Presley, and sold over 45 million albums, with 38 Top 40 hits. Greg talked about many of those hits, and featured cuts from Pat's new Duets album and a lot more.

You can catch Greg online at the www.1420thebreeze.com site or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to the website and clicking on the 'audio archives' link.

Arne Fogel's weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is still being broadcast on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota. It can now be accessed on demand at *http://kbem.podbean.com/?s=The+Bing+Shift* and it's well worth a listen.

Jack Boyle's BING *for the SEASONS* show has had some varied themes. On August 2nd Jack presented a *"Holiday in Paris"* special with our favorite musical tour guide singing, in both English and French. Then in September, Jack turned his attention to Bing's versions of some of the greatest country songs of all time (as selected by the Western Writers of America). On October 4th, the theme was *Songs for Autumn*, featuring relevant songs by Bing. Jack's Thanksgiving Special aired on November 1st, at 7 pm ET (and on Thanksgiving Day, at 12 Noon ET). The songs played were:

I've Got Plenty to be Thankful for – You've Got A Friend (Bing with Harry Crosby on vocals & guitar) - Dear Hearts and Gentle People - My Blue Heaven - Back in Your Own Back Yard (with Al Jolson) - Home Cookin' - Y'All Come - Way Back Home (with Ella Fitzgerald and The Mills Brothers) - The Music of Home - Because of You - True Love (with Rosemary Clooney) - My Cup Runneth Over (with Kathryn Crosby) – Children - No Time at All - Let Us Break Bread Together (with Frank Sinatra) - Say One for Me - The Bells of St. Mary's - May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You (with Nat King Cole and The Andrews Sisters)

The show airs the first Sunday of every month at 7 pm on Hudson Valley Public Radio's JAZZ FM, streaming on hvpr.org and simulcast on wdlcradio.com (107.7 FM and 1490 AM). There are periodic encore broadcasts.

KEZW and the Glenn Miller Archive at the University of Colorado continue to present the ***Star Spangled Radio Hour*** every Saturday night at 6pm. Hosts Rick Crandall and Dennis Spragg introduce rare live big band radio broadcasts from the 30s and 40s each week. The broadcasts can usually be accessed for a few weeks after their transmission. Rick and Dennis also used the star-studded *Command Performance Victory Extra* show around the 70th anniversary of VJ Day and they had a special 2-hour session to mark the occasion. Bing opened the *Victory Extra* show and was heard singing "Medley: You Are My Sunshine, Sonny Boy, You're the Top" (with Frank Sinatra), "San Fernando Valley" and "White Christmas". Some of these were taken from earlier Command Performance broadcasts. Also on Halloween night, Bing's Philco show of October 30, 1946 was aired with Les Paul, Lina Romay, The Charioteers and Skitch Henderson being featured.

Rich Conaty's long-running ***"The Big Broadcast"*** shows from New York on WFUV continue to please. Rich puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s which of course includes Bing. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight (ET) and you can listen again through the WFUV archives on the Internet.

TV highlights - UK

Films and other items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

Discovering Bing Crosby	Sky Arts
High Society	TCM
Holiday Inn	SkyDramaRom
Let's Make Love	SkyDramaRom
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM
Stagecoach	Film4
That's Entertainment	BBC2
That's Entertainment II	BBC2
The Legendary Bing Crosby	Sky Arts

BBC Four broadcast the 4-hour documentary *All or Nothing At All* during August as a lead-in to the 100th anniversary of Frank Sinatra's birth in December. This was shown on HBO in the USA in April and it was a top class presentation. Using Sinatra's own voice from various interviews over the years it told Frank's story fairly thoroughly with many rare photos and film clips. The first episode included plenty of Bing starting with a scene from the Sennett short *One More Chance*. Crosby's importance to the entertainment world of the time was illustrated by a whole screen of the groaner on the front page of numerous magazine covers. We saw him singing "White Christmas" and there was a radio excerpt of him jesting with Frank. The clip from the war bond sale in 1944 was shown too.

Frank, Bing and Bob Hope entertain at the war bond sale

The director had gathered many contributors, some archive, some newly interviewed, including his children, first wife Nancy, and other stars like Harry Belafonte and Lauren Bacall. Cleverly, though, rather than cutting in talking heads, he kept them mostly unseen, voices only, which ensured our attention remained fully on Frank and the fantastic torrent of archive footage. The effect was immersive and it was one of the best looks at Sinatra's career your editor has seen.

BBC Four also broadcast a special three-part documentary series in July, *Rock 'n' Roll America*, exploring the roots of rock music in the USA, its subsequent explosion around the world and how the first wave of rock stars opened the door for modern pop in the decade between 1954 and 1964. In the first episode, the gyrations of the new rock stars on stage were contrasted with what had gone before and to illustrate this, a clip of Bing was shown standing quite still while singing "Don't Fence Me In" from the 1944 short "Swinging with the Stars".

Bert Bishop told me about another programme on BBC4 which was broadcast on August 28. This was part of the *Friday Night at the Proms* series and was "Prom 35: The Story of Swing". This included a creditable recreation of Bing with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra performing "Livin' in the Sunlight, Lovin' in the Moonlight". The orchestra was the Guy Barker Band and the vocalist was Andrew Playfoot.

The "Discovering" series on Sky Arts uses Bing tracks now and again and the episode about Rita Hayworth and had the 1931 version of "Out of Nowhere" playing in the background. The chapter about Sophia Loren employed the Bing and Dixie duet of "A Fine Romance" to illustrate the love affair of Carlo Ponti and Ms Loren.

UK radio

The National Presenters on BBC Radio2

Not too much to report and songs played of which we were aware over the last four months were:

Desmond Carrington:

Who Threw the Overalls in Mrs Murphy's Chowder (July 17) - How Lucky Can You Get (with Fred) (July 31) - Fugue for Tinhorns - Young and Healthy (October 16)

Clare Teal:

The Waiter and the Porter and the Upstairs Maid (July 26) - Jeepers Creepers (August 16) - Brazil (with Rosie) (September 6) - Straight Down the Middle (October 25)

Elaine Paige: I've Got Plenty to Be Thankful For (September 20) - True Love (November 1) - Ding Dong the Witch Is Dead (November 1)

Don Black: Isle of Capri (July 19) - A Couple of Song and Dance Men (1975) (August 2) - Put It There Pal (August 16)

The local radio presenters

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radiocumbria) has continued to play lots of Bing in response to requests made on her Saturday night shows (10pm-midnight). She missed one show in October whilst her Barrow studio was refurbished (for refurbishment read "total devastation") but nevertheless she played a total of 36 Crosby items. There was quite an eclectic range of songs, examples being "You Are My Lucky Star" (from the JSP CD), "Makin' Whoopee", "What Takes My Fancy" (with Rosemary Clooney), and "Never Been Kissed" (with Fred Astaire).

Anne continues to welcome requests by email to *anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk* so email her if you want to hear Bing on the radio. There's a "Listen again" facility for up to 7 days after the initial broadcast.

Bill Rennells ***Harmony Night*** show on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet continues to play Bing regularly. It's a three-hour broadcast starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings and he too has a "Listen Again" option. In all, 21 songs by Bing were heard during the four months including "Isle of Innisfree" (1966 version), "My Heart and I" (from the JSP CD) and "Maria Bonita". A special request was made by Marion Goldie (who used to sing as "Marion Keene") for Bing and Fred singing "Pick Yourself Up". Marion's husband was Ken Goldie, a bass trombonist who had played on the session. Bill Rennells also played "That's What Life Is All About" as a tribute to Ken Barnes.

As I have mentioned before, once a month, I send off an email to Bill, Howard Leader and Anne Hopper requesting a Bing song and they always oblige. If more of you would join me and email Bill with your Bing requests to *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk* we will have plenty more Crosby on the air.

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** whose programme of big band swing and balladeers goes out each Sunday afternoon has not played Bing so often this time around but he did play "September Song" and "September in the Rain" for me. Wherever you are in the world, please email Howard with a Crosby request at *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk.* There is a "Listen Again" option.

Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music* show on BBC Radio Wales on Sundays at 9 p.m. and she has played Mr. Crosby at least six times in the period under review. Songs such as "I'll See You in My Dreams" and "Busy Doing Nothing" were heard. Beverley also has a "Listen again" facility for those of you on the Internet.

The Late Paul Barnes, the two-hour show hosted by Paul Barnes over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights has a regularly monthly segment featuring the 2013 Crosby calendar. He plays the calendar song each time and usually adds another Crosby song or two on each occasion. He also had a tribute to Ken Barnes playing "Pick Yourself Up" and "Top Billing" (this was also for Marian Goldie).

We always mention **Angel Radio** which has been broadcasting a Bing radio show on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. but tragedy struck on September 23 when a fire caused major damage to the studios, the unique record library and memorabilia collection. Station manager Tony Smith, who was the only member of staff in the premises at the time, said he was faced with a "pillar of fire from ceiling to floor" after a fluorescent light fitting burst into flames. He said: "The whole of the inside of the building is soot-damaged, the studios are blackened and also water-damaged from the hoses. Unique 78rpm shellac records littered the floor smashed and warped." Urgent fund-raising efforts are underway and thankfully live shows started again on November 1. If you would like to make a contribution to their fund-raising drive, see www.angelradio.co.uk.

Australia

John Funnell's "I've Heard That Song Before" from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Wednesday on WNY FM 88.9 includes Bing every week and the show can now be heard online at www.wynfm.org.au/.

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7 FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons called "On Air with Bing" which broadcasts a complete Bing Crosby radio show each week. This is presented by Bob Horsfall.

Other radio programmes featuring our man are Peter O'Brien's "Music Showcase" on Eastern FM 98.1 (Mondays 12 noon to 2 p.m.) Loris Young's show on 3WBC FM 94.1 (Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) has plenty of Crosby too.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Val Doonican, the Irish singer and TV entertainer died on July 2 at the age of 88. Born in Waterford, Ireland, Doonican's career took off after he was booked to appear on *Sunday Night at the Palladium* in 1963. It led him to be offered his own BBC-TV show - for which he became known for his trademark rocking chair, colourful jumpers and cardigans - and it also kick-started his recording career. He was a regular fixture on TV with The Val Doonican show which ran on the BBC from 1965 to 1986, featuring his own performances and guest artists. He was often in the UK charts in the 1960s and '70s with songs like "Walk Tall" and "Elusive Butterfly". In the album charts, he had five successive top 10 records. Val was a keen golfer and this was how he became associated with Bing at Gleneagles in Scotland in August 1975. He described the event in a magazine article.

The whole series of *Pro-Celebrity Golf* is usually played over a couple of weeks, the promoters endeavouring to put two nine-hole matches "in the can" per day. The pilot drew my attention to a tiny grass airstrip up ahead, or should I say down ahead, a long tidy row of similar aircraft to our own lining either side of it, rather like a guard of honour.

Some black limousines stood by the modest reception building indicating, in fact, that I wasn't the only one arriving at that particular time. In fact as I said hello to one of the representatives from BBC Television, standing by the cars, another plane lightly touched down.

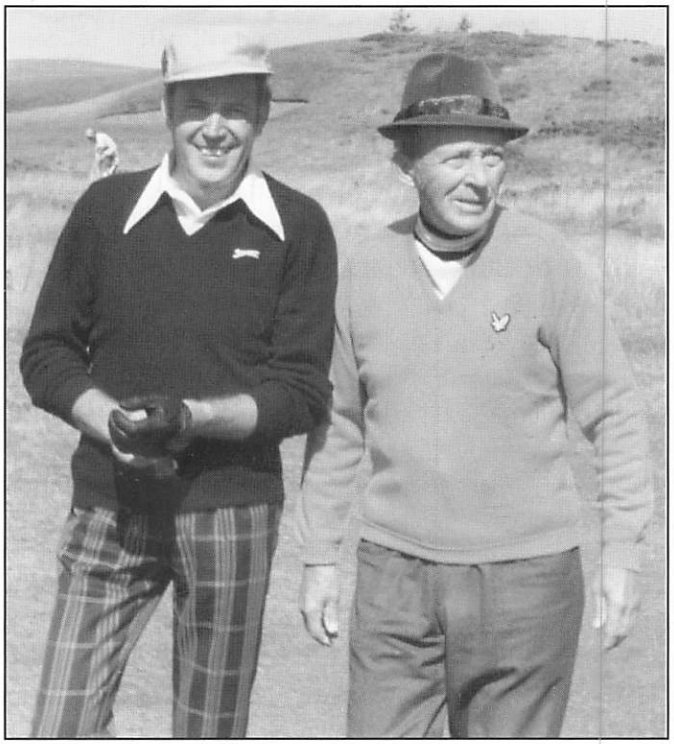
"That'll be Mr. Crosby now," I heard somebody behind me say, causing my ears to prick up. One of my great personal ambitions had long been to meet the man I always considered to be the finest pop singer of all time. I felt sure the opportunity was at hand, knowing we were both heading for the same destination.

A minute or two later, I was ushered into one of the waiting cars, and just as I climbed aboard, a voice said, "Oh, Val, have you met Bing?" I turned, and there entering the car parked alongside was The Man Himself.

"Hi there, Val, how'ya doin'?" He reached out of the car and took my hand. "I believe we're playin' a bit of golf together today." Till that moment of course I had no idea who my playing opponent was to be.

Just as our respective cars were pulling away, he opened his window and called out, "Let's have some lunch together before the game." We did just that within the hour and then made our way to the golf course. Bing, as most golfers will know, had been an extremely good amateur golfer, and even

while in his early seventies he still played well. It was indeed a day I shall never forget, made even more memorable by the young Scottish lad, who had no idea who the great Mr. Crosby was when he asked for my autograph during the round.
(Val Doonican, writing in *People's Friend*, May 23, 1987)



Val with Bing at Gleneagles in 1975.

Val always spoke warmly about Bing and in 1982 he recorded a very pleasant tribute album for RCA titled "Val Sings Bing" and devoted one of his TV shows to the same theme.

Cilla Black, the UK based personality who developed from 1960s pop starlet to UK TV royalty, died on August 1st at the age of 72. She shot to fame at the height of the Merseybeat era, immersing herself in music while working as a hat girl at Liverpool's famous Cavern Club and serving coffee at another nightspot, the Zodiac. She eventually followed the Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers and Rory Storm and the Hurricanes onto the stage. Her big break came when John Lennon introduced her to Beatles' producer Brian Epstein. Overcome with nerves, she initially failed to impress. However, she secured a contract when Epstein saw her again, and went on to have 20 consecutive UK top 40 hits. This included two consecutive number ones in 1964, and eleven top 10 entries. However, it's her time as a TV presenter - and catchphrases such as "lorra, lorra laughs" - that many will best remember her for. The 1980s saw her dominate Saturday prime time viewing. She hosted both *Surprise, Surprise* - the ITV programme that aimed to make people's dreams come true - and matchmaking show *Blind Date*. At one stage the latter, which she presented for 18 years, was drawing in seventeen million viewers. Cilla Black's wit, pithy put-downs and motherly advice made her perfect for the role. So how does she have a link with Bing?

Their paths crossed when they both guested on the Eamonn Andrews chat show in London on June 27, 1965 with Spike Milligan, Patrick Campbell and Harry H. Corbett. Cilla had just sung "Ol' Man River" and then Spike Milligan (a Crosby fan) introduced Bing who came on to tremendous applause. Bing quickly said that he liked Cilla's song and she replied, "Ooh you liked my song. I touched your hat in the make-up room!" Bing said that if they were to do *Hello Dolly!* in the UK, Cilla should play the lead. The two of them then discussed the show which Cilla had seen in New York when Carol Channing had fallen on stage. Later on, Cilla was prevailed upon to demonstrate her Liverpool accent which caused much merriment.

Maureen O'Hara. The prevailing image of Maureen O'Hara, who died on October 24 aged 95, was one of a feisty heroine, red hair blazing, who was more than a match for her male co-stars, such as John Wayne with whom she made five films, including *The Quiet Man* (1952). She was born Maureen FitzSimons, the second of six children, in a suburb of Dublin, Ireland. Her mother was an accomplished contralto, and her father, a businessman, part-owned Shamrock Rovers football team. "We grew up on sport and music. All the great singers that would come to visit Dublin would come to our house for a musical evening," she said. "We six kids, we used to sit at the top of the stairs and listen."

Maureen was torn between wanting to be an opera singer or a football player. In the end she settled for acting, having been accepted by Dublin's Abbey theatre at the age of 14. Three years later, during her theatrical training at the Abbey, she received a request to travel to London for a screen test at Elstree studios. As a result she landed two bit parts but, more significantly, she impressed the actor Charles Laughton, who could not forget her "hauntingly beautiful eyes". Laughton and the producer Erich Pommer, the co-founders of Mayflower Productions, offered her a seven-year contract, and changed her name to O'Hara. Her first role was as a naive orphan girl involved with Cornish smugglers in Alfred Hitchcock's corny *Jamaica Inn* (1939), opposite Laughton as the lip-smacking squire. In 1939 Laughton also persuaded RKO studios to cast O'Hara as the Gypsy girl Esmeralda to his Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. She gave both a sensual and touching portrayal, which immediately established her as a Hollywood star. Her career from then on was divided between colourful escapist entertainments and more serious black-and-white efforts. Among the former were piratical and exotic adventure yarns such as *The Black Swan* (1942), *The Spanish Main* (1945), and *Sinbad the Sailor* (1947).

In 1941, O'Hara played her first part for John Ford in *How Green Was My Valley*, set in a Welsh mining town, in which her Irish accent, Donald Crisp's Scottish

and Walter Pidgeon's American served for a Welsh accent. She became a resident star at 20th Century-Fox, where she proved to be the perfect middle-class wife in *Sentimental Journey* (1946), *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947) *and Sitting Pretty* (1948). But she was her tempestuous self again as a Southern belle in the period piece *The Foxes of Harrow* (1947), and in *Rio Grande* (1950), the last of Ford's cavalry trilogy, in which she played the estranged Confederate wife of a Yankee colonel (John Wayne), fighting over their son.

She retired from films in the 1970s to live in the Virgin Islands and run a commuter sea plane service, Antilles Airboats, with her then husband. Fortunately she was coaxed out of her 20-year retirement in 1991 to appear as John Candy's domineering Catholic mother in *Only the Lonely.* After that she appeared in three TV movies, including *The Last Dance* (2000), in which she played a retired teacher. In 2005 she moved back to Ireland, settling in her house on a 35-acre estate, Lugdine Park, in west Cork. In 2012 she returned to the US to be closer to her family as her health declined.

Although O'Hara was never nominated for an Oscar, she received an honorary Academy award in 2014 in acknowledgment of a lifetime of performances that "glowed with passion, warmth and strength".

Although they also met at social occasions, her main interaction with Bing was as a guest on the Kraft Music Hall of January 11, 1940 when she also joined in the singing of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" with Bing, Bob Burns and Alan Hale.

Coleen Gray with her co-star

Coleen Gray, the actress, passed away on August 3rd. She was 92. After initially playing a bit part in *State Fair* (1945), she became pregnant and briefly stopped working, only to return a year later as the love interest of the character played by John Wayne in *Red River* (1948), which was shot in 1946 but held for release until 1948. Gray appeared in two 1947 films noir: In *Kiss of Death* as ex-con Victor Mature's wife and as Richard Widmark's target; and in *Nightmare Alley* as Tyrone Power's carnival performer wife, "Electra." Her only Crosby film was *Riding High* (1950) when she played Alice Higgins. We know she is the only girl for Bing because at the end of the film he names a horse 'Princess', a pet name for her.

In a magazine article of the time, Coleen wrote about working with Bing.

> "Bing's ad libs are often cleverer than the script and he seems to enjoy them as much as everyone else. He transacts a lot of his business on the set, answering phone calls and dictating letters to a secretary in his trailer between takes. He is always surrounded by his radio-writers, gag-men and business associates. Often he would go off to the side of the set to discuss business deals with men who came to the studio to see him.
>
> All in all, I found Bing to be a happy, well-adjusted man. He's completely relaxed and simply will not be worried by anything. For instance, in the musical number we had to do together there was some confusion because the dance director gave us too many instructions at once. These instructions would probably have been simple for professional dancers, which Bing and I aren't. I was getting rattled and unhappy and could see that Bing was bothered, too. But did he allow it to upset him? Certainly not. He just said, "Hold on a minute. I can learn just one thing at a time," and we proceeded on that basis."

After *Riding High* she was cast in routine crime, western and action films and never sustained the high profile career for which she seemed destined. Titles like *Las Vegas Shakedown* (1955), *The Leech Woman* (1960) and her last film, *Cry from the Mountain* (1986) were typical.

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Yvonne Craig, the actress remembered for her part as 'Batgirl', died on August 17. She was 78. As a young teenager, Yvonne showed such promise as a dancer that she was accepted to Denham's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Her training progressed until she left the company in 1957 over a disagreement on casting changes. She moved to Los Angeles hoping to continue her dancing, but was soon cast in movies. At first, Yvonne had small parts in pictures such as *The Young Land* (1959), Gidget (1959), *The Gene Krupa Story* (1959) and *High Time* (1960) with Bing when she played 'Randy Pruitt'.

After that, her film career just bumped along. As Yvonne was dating Elvis Presley at the time, she did have a supporting role in the two Elvis pictures, *It Happened at the World's Fair* (1963) and *Kissin' Cousins* (1964). But her fame would come with the cult television series *Batman* (1966) in which she played Commissioner Gordon's daughter, Barbara. Her secret

identity was "Batgirl" and as the Commissioner's daughter, she was aware of all the calls of trouble taking place in Gotham City. Her character, Batgirl, was part of the 67-68 season, which was the end of the run for the show. After *Batman*, she also appeared on other television programs such as *Star Trek* (1966) (when she played the Orion slave girl Marta in the episode "Whom Gods Destroy") and *The Six Million Dollar Man* (1974). As her career wound down, Yvonne went into the real estate business.

Yvonne Craig (right) greets Bing and Nicole Maurey in High Time

Larry Daniels (1922-2015). An actor who became a popular nightclub performer died on February 6 at the age of 92. His only Crosby film was *Rood to Utopia* (1945) where he played the ringleader of a gang who set upon Bing and Bob when the pair found the map of the Klondike goldmine. In vaudeville as a child, he eventually found his niche performing on 1950s television variety shows. These included the Steve Allen and Ed Sullivan shows which could be regarded as extending Daniels' vaudeville career by providing a showcase for acts suitable for family consumption. He ended his career as a stand-up comic and gave Woody Allen one of his first writing jobs. Daniels opened for singer Johnny Mathis in Las Vegas, and the pair took their show to the Copa in 1960.

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

In August 1915, Harry Crosby (aged 12) had enjoyed a summer job as a locker boy in the municipal swimming pool in Mission Park. On August 27, Al Jolson opened in the show "Dancing Around" at the Auditorium, Spokane but it is not known whether young Harry attended. On September 18, Bing's grandfather, Dennis Harrigan, died in Tacoma at the age of eighty-three.

75 YEARS AGO

Bing took a break from the *Kraft Music Hall* show after the show on August 14, 1940 and devoted time to the Del Mar season which ran through September 2. After two disappointing seasons, the track enjoyed a better year with the daily handle rising to an average of $192,075.

A row was looming with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) which had tried to double its license fees and radio broadcasters had formed a boycott of it and founded a competing royalty agency, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI). Bing made his views quite clear indicating that radio would have to get along without him unless he was permitted to sing tunes turned out by ASCAP. He served notice that his new contract with the J. Walter Thompson agency, which handled the Kraft Music Hall air programs, would be renewed in December only with an inserted clause allowing his withdrawal if or when ASCAP songs were no longer available for his broadcast.

Larry Crosby, explained that neither side in the controversy has had any consideration for the name singers on the air. He said:

"There are 1,109 authors writing ASCAP numbers, and their works are being made available through 137 publishers. Bing and other singers need this flow of songs. Bing, himself, eats up around five tunes a week and the only place he can get them is through ASCAP."

On August 16, a press preview of the film *Rhythm on the River* took place on the racetrack at Del Mar, supported by a live radio show from the Del Mar Turf Club with many guest stars including Mary Martin, Pat O'Brien, and Lillian Cornell. Bing and Mary Martin featured the songs from the film. The following week the New York premiere of *Rhythm on the River* was held at the Paramount Theater.

> Some may tab this as the best picture Crosby has appeared in for several years. It's certainly one of his toppers . . . Bing Crosby continues his policy of splitting co-starring credits and performance importance with others in the cast. . . Crosby tackles his acting assignment with the nonchalance that has proven effective in past releases and on the air. He also provides much of the musical portion of the film in singing tunes in solo and with Miss Martin…
>
> Total of seven songs are presented by Crosby and Miss Martin, any one of which has potentialities

for swinging into the hit class. Although 'Only Forever' gets strong plugging in the picture, there's a good chance that the title tune, 'Rhythm on the River,' sung by Crosby will catch strongest pop favor…
(*Variety*, August 21, 1940)

Bing and Mary Martin sing "Only Forever" in *Rhythm on the River.*

During August, Bing played in the sectional qualifying round for the U.S. Amateur Open Golf Championship at the Bel Air Country Club but came in sixth. Only the first four were to qualify and it seemed that Bing had missed out. However, two of the qualifiers dropped out and Bing was able to proceed to the next qualifying round to be held at Winged Foot in September. Together with Dixie and young son Lindsay, he journeyed over to Winged Foot Golf Club, Mamaroneck, New York. After two practice rounds in front of large galleries, Bing shot an 83 in the opening qualifying round of the National Amateur Golf Championship.

The next day, he had a seventy-seven in the second qualifying round and missed qualifying for the actual tournament by five strokes.

> News that Crosby was at Winged Foot created a sensation. His fans, mostly women, swarmed all over the course, straining to catch sight of him. The crowd grew so large and so unruly the club called in New York State troopers to protect him and his partners.
>
> Crosby shot 83 in the first round. The next day even larger and even more unmanageable crowds turned out. Trying to help the golfers move through the gallery, marshals grabbed the long bamboo poles normally used to sweep early morning dew from greens to create a box around them.
>
> Crosby played better, but late in the day it became obvious that he wouldn't qualify. On the last hole, a 415-yard par 4 then, Crosby played a good drive, but as he walked towards his ball the crowd broke through the cordon and swarmed around him. It took the troopers fifteen minutes to clear the fairway so they could finish. Crosby made 7 on the eighteenth and shot 77 for the round. He missed qualifying by five strokes.
> (*Golf Anecdotes: From the Links of Scotland to Tiger Woods* by Robert T. Sommers, page 147)

Meanwhile, Bing's recording of "Sierra Sue" reached the number one spot in the charts and remained there for four weeks.

Bing continued to play a lot of golf until early October. Many of the matches were for charity, and BINGANG reported on one of them.

> Sept. 29, 1940 (a beautiful sunny day): a sun-tanned Bing played in a charity golf match for the benefit of refugee children at Belmont Country Club in Massachusetts. Playing with him was Toney Penna. They were paired against Harold "Jug" McSpaden & Fred Wright. There was a gallery of around 5000 people. Bing was asked to sing, but gallantly refused, saying "You will pardon me, but I am on vacation, let's play golf." Bing was dressed in a green cashmere sweater, light doeskin trousers, brown sports hat adorned with a feathered band, a navy blue sport shirt with a light blue collar, black & orange socks and brown spiked golf shoes. Every time Bing took a swing with his club, he would fling his ever-present pipe down onto the green from his mouth. After Toney scored a few points, Bing ran over to him, flung his arms around Toney's neck and kissed him. Later, he laid down on the green and exchanged repartee with Toney while he shot.
> (*BINGANG*, 1941)

On October 19, Bing's recording of "Only Forever" reached number one in the charts where it remained for ten weeks.

Bing spoke briefly in a radio broadcast on November 4 in which Wendell Willkie made his final appeal to the nation in his Presidential campaign. Willkie broadcast from the Ritz Theatre in New York and Bing was beamed in from Hollywood. The Associated Press quoted Bing as saying, "I personally am against the third term and plenty of other people out here (in California) are too." Bing is said to have wagered $1000 on Willkie with a New York bookie. *The Philadelphia Record* newspaper later criticized Bing in its editorial for supporting Willkie after "having enriched himself under

Roosevelt." Bing subsequently wrote to the newspaper defending his stance. On November 5, Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt was reelected as president of the United States.

> Bing Crosby, who made an air bid for Willkie votes Monday night, yesterday was reported to have reduced the radio set in his Paramount dressing room to kindling wood
> (*Daily Variety*, November 6, 1940)

But soon it was back to work. Filming started of *Road to Zanzibar* at Paramount in November. Then on November 14, the groaner returned to the *Kraft Music Hall* show and appeared weekly until February 6, 1941. The audience share for the season was 18.6 which placed the show in eleventh position. The Jack Benny show was in first place in the Hooper ratings with 36.2.

> Preceded by the usual half-truth, half-publicity reports that the show was going to be "different," Bing Crosby returned last week to the Kraft Music Hall, restoring it to the slickness which in times past, if not in the last months, has been exemplary.
>
> More music and more singing there may have been but it would take a stop-watch to tell the difference as between music and dialogue, so far as an ear that has not heard the show for a long time was concerned. Instead of stressing that the show was "different," it might be truer to describe it as "better." It gave every evidence of being thoughtfully put together entertainment, wherein a master stylist of song was visited by sundry personalities and all of them talked like Carroll Carroll—Connie Boswell talked that way, Wingy Manone talked that way, Bill Frawley was thoroughly Carrollesque.
>
> There were "bits" and "fade-ins" and "gags" and Bob Burns losing his place in the script. So maybe Bing Crosby did sing a bit more (he should) and Connie Boswell was added to the program for the series (she's good) and the press department made the most of it (they would) but actually, the Kraft formula was little changed in basic components.
> (*Variety*, November 20, 1940)

On December 11, *Variety* carried an item about Bing's backing of presidential candidate Wendell Willkie.

> Bing Crosby, in a letter to the Philly Record last week, answered an attack in a pre-election editorial in the daily taking him to task for his endorsement of Wendell Willkie "while being enriched under the Roosevelt administration".
>
> Wrote Crosby: "It would seem that all the differences of opinion concerning the two presidential candidates were pretty conclusively settled on Nov. 5. I feel if 26,000,000 voters esteem Mr. Roosevelt as the man for the job, it's surely good enough for me.
>
> "I do think, though, that whether the two Roosevelt administrations played an important part in the remarkably good fortune which has attended my career seems trivial in consideration of the traditional issues that were involved."
>
> The crooner then went into a defense of the use of WPA money on his Santa Anita (sic) racing plant which the Record said "raised an unhappy odor in Congress".
> (*Variety*, December 11, 1940)

Bing was involved a number of recording sessions during December and also he signed a fresh contract with Paramount which was thought to require him to make nine films in three years at $175,000 per film. In addition, he signed a contract with Decca for five years at $60,000 per annum plus a percentage.

During the year, his royalties on records were $77,000 and he was placed seventh in the annual U.S.A. film box office stars list for 1940. Mickey Rooney was first.

Bing had had seventeen songs that became chart hits in 1940 and he won the *Movie-Radio Guide* Star of Stars award for best male singer of popular songs for the year. He went on to win the same award each year for the next three years. Also *Down Beat* magazine named Bing and Helen O'Connell as the top vocalists of 1940.

50 YEARS AGO

As August, 1965 opened, Bing was filming *Stagecoach* at Arapaho Falls and Arapaho Glacier in the Indian Peaks Wilderness, near Boulder, Colorado and after a few days there, the filming continued on the Twentieth-Century-Fox back lot in Hollywood. Then it was off on location to the Twentieth-Century-Fox ranch in Malibu Canyon before Bing completed his part on September 2.

The next day, he taped a *Hollywood Palace* show with Louis Armstrong, Phil Harris and the Young Americans which was shown on ABC-TV on September 25.

> ...While standing behind him for part of this number I often think he has a poor tailor. Even his performance clothes look - in a word - "baggy." When I tell my folks about this one night, my mother says he always had a reputation over the years for being a bad dresser. And yet his loose-fitting garments may be the result of nothing more than him being on a diet at the time - something my current age has much experience with. Back then, however, that thought never occurs to the 17-year-old mind in my 145-pound body. . . . At 62, his voice is deep, full and every bit as resonant as it was for any performance at any time in his career. Watching him whenever possible, it seems to me as though it is just so effortless on his part. His head tilts back slightly, the jaw drops and out comes this incredible sound unlike any voice before or since.

...Standing there, less than four feet from him as he signs the album and hands it back to me, I am thinking how authentic his hairpiece appears. No one unaware of the truth would ever have suspected it is not his real hair. But overall, the one aspect I find truly remarkable about his appearance is that he has the most youthful-looking eyes I have ever seen in any person. Either before or since, I have never seen such bright blue irises surrounded by such large, pure white sclera. They are totally devoid of any red blood vessels, which is probably why Phil Harris comments at one point that Bing should not worry his "baby-blues."

(Richard Zimmerman, one of the Young Americans, writing in *BING* magazine, winter, 2001)

Although suffering problems with kidney stones, Bing taped another Hollywood Palace show with Caterina Valente which was shown on September 18.

Hollywood Palace starting its third year on the vaudeo spectrum, seems to continue in affable and agreeable ways. At this point the format continues to be serviceable and there's no cause to re-write this hit. The formula of a name emcee and name talent is sufficiently potent to make this one of the better variety displays on the medium. Bing Crosby, making his third appearance on this soiree, gave the season's premiere a flavor unique to him. He mixes affability and entertainment in equally potent doses and gets involved in the proceedings to give the show an entertaining tone. For example, he straighted for Tim Conway of *McHale's Navy* who needed a straight of Crosby's caliber to look good. He sang with Caterina Valente, and each endowed the other with an added ingredient. On her own, Miss Valente delivered with her accustomed top-rated product. . . (*Variety*, September 22, 1965)

However, Bing and Kathryn were unable to go to England to watch Meadow Court run in the St. Leger at Doncaster, for Bing had more kidney stones. A cystoscopy provided relief. On September 13, another Hollywood Palace show was recorded but after another kidney stone attack, Bing had to rest for two weeks,

Later that month, on September 28, Bing recorded "The White World of Winter" for Reprise Records using a previously recorded musical accompaniment by an orchestra conducted by Sonny Burke. Then, Bing and Kathryn flew to France and the following day watched the horse Meadow Court work out. Subsequently, they saw Meadow Court run in Le Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in Paris but the horse could only finish seventh. Bing and Kathryn went on to Madrid, Spain, (where they stayed at the Ritz) for several days and then to Burgos and the Landa Palace for partridge shooting. On October 12, Bing and Kathryn arrived at Dublin Airport from Spain and gave a press conference there. They spent several days in Ireland and Bing took a photograph of Galway Bay.

Catarina Valente joins Bing in a medley.

On his way home, Bing stopped off in Canada and while in Toronto, Bing was interviewed by *Telescope* host Fletcher Markle for a television show "A Profile of Bing Crosby" which was shown on CBC on January 13, 1966. Later that day, Bing visited Woodbine Racetrack, Toronto, for the Canadian Championship Stakes and made the presentation to the winning owner at around 5:00 p.m

Back in California, Bing attended a black-tie party on November 6 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Thieriot in Hillsborough at which Princess Margaret and her husband Lord Snowdon were present.

Having Bing Crosby as her dinner partner was the greatest thrill of Princess Margaret's San Francisco visit. The two were seated together Saturday night at the black-tie party Mr. and Mrs. Charles Thieriot gave at their home in Hillsborough. Earlier, the English Princess had told Mrs. Thieriot, "You're giving me the greatest treat of my life." The Royal visitor had admired Bing's songs and movies since she was a child. She and the star, who moved his family to Hillsborough nearly two years ago, plunged into instant conversation when they met. Afterward, Bing said they talked mostly about music. "She is very knowledgeable about music of every kind. She wanted to know what I thought of some of the newer singers like Jack Jones and Andy Williams. She is a very bright, attractive young lady with a good sense

of humor."
(Unidentified clipping, reproduced in BINGANG magazine, December 1966)

On November 29, Bing, with his young son, Harry, taped the Christmas edition of the *Hollywood Palace* television show which was shown on December 25. Over the next few days, Mr. Crosby recorded a total of 16 songs for the Longines Symphonette Society at Coast Recorders, San Francisco, using prerecorded tracks prepared by British orchestra leader Geoff Love. The tracks formed part of a six LP album comprising eighty-four tunes, said to be chosen by Bing, most of which were orchestral. He also recorded a radio promotional disc for the album.

Bing guested on the *Bob Hope Comedy Special* television show on December 15 with Jack Benny, Janet Leigh, and Nancy Wilson. This is said to be Bob Hope's first television variety show in color.

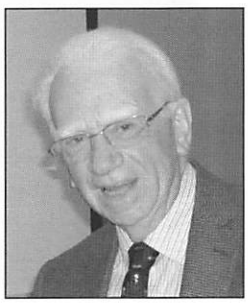
During December, the Crosbys moved into their new house on Jackling Drive, Hillsborough. The Robin Road property had not yet been sold.

Starting on December 21, Kathryn Crosby appeared as *Peter Pan* at the Hyatt Theater, Burlingame, until January 2. Mary Frances made a brief appearance in the final scene. Comments in *Time* magazine were slightly critical and Bing wrote to them about it.

> In your "People" section (Dec. 21), you made reference to Kathryn's recent appearance in the musical version of Peter Pan in San Francisco.
>
> While we're always grateful for any mention in such a fine magazine as TIME, I know you want to be corrected when you're in error. You said Jeanne Miller of the San Francisco Examiner panned Mrs. Crosby's performance and described the performance of our little daughter Mary Frances as stodgy.
>
> The only thing that could possibly cause umbrage about Mrs. Crosby's performance was that Miss Miller said she was too girlish and too pretty to be Peter Pan—which is sort of a mixed criticism.
>
> The reference to Mary Frances as being stodgy was made about another performer in the cast. If Mary Frances is stodgy, then Sammy Davis is taciturn, moribund and laconic. For weeks at a time we have to keep her in a strait jacket and an Oregon boat.

KEEPING TRACK

Richard Baker looks at the new releases



COMPACT DISCS

I'm afraid we are still suffering from an extreme drought on the new issue front, so this is a pretty short offering. We still have hopes.

We start off with something where Bing's own contribution is also little on the short side -

Christmas in the Air! Television Stars Ring in the Holidays! Jasmine JASCD 824 2-CD set

Price around £10 (UK) around $22 (US) Also available as MP3 download

A Crosby Christmas (Parts 1 and 2) Deck the Halls / That Christmas Feeling / I'd Like to Hitch a Ride with Santa Claus / The Snowman / That Christmas Feeling

Here we have Bing with sons Gary, Phillip, Dennis and Lindsay with the Jeff Alexander Chorus in a pair of medleys which have appeared many times on LP and CD. The titles shown on the sleeve are not quite correct, but the recording is complete. (Oddly my computer insists that it is Dolores Duran singing "Sur Ma Vie"!). Of additional interest to those interested in the doings of the Crosby boys, we have "Dear Mr. Santa Claus" and "That's What I Want for Christmas", both sung by Lindsay as solos with backing from the Jeff Alexander Chorus. He sounds quite confident if slightly quavery at the start of the first item. In total there are 56 Christmas themed songs on the two CDs with numerous well known stars from 1940s and 50s, (and a few you will have forgotten) such as Patti Page, Frankie Laine, Dinah Shore, Connie Boswell, Johnny Mercer and Perry Como, with some stars being allocated several songs. A welcome and very Christmassy set full of nostalgic items. Don't be misled by the title. Of the tracks which I have been able to check all are derived from studio recordings.

Now You Has Jazz - The Hot Club of Spokane

Available as CD by order over the internet http://hotclubofspokane.bandcamp.com/ releases at $7 (minimum) as well as digital download.

A "Tribute" album. Some months ago The Hot Club of Spokane invited a form of "crowd funding" to finance this release as a tribute to "three of Spokane's biggest jazz icons: Bing Crosby, Mildred Bailey, and Al Rinker." Members of the Hot Club of Spokane perform 12 numbers. Two of them - "Happy Feet" and "Now You Has Jazz" are clearly strongly reminiscent of The Rhythm Boys and Bing respectively, and whilst there are other titles that were recorded

by Bing they are not so strongly "in the style of" and more properly described as jazz re-interpretations. I get the impression that the CD is mainly a showcase for the group's lead female singer, Rachel Aldridge, who is pretty good, covering Mildred Bailey material, which dominates. There are also a number of very competent soloists. One song was written by Al Rinker, who is otherwise only represented by "Happy Feet". It is all well recorded. The jazz influences are strong and there is a gospel choir backing on one track. There could be much appeal to those with an interest in Mildred Bailey, local Spokane connections and more generally in modern-ish interpretations of the material. I found it quite entertaining but I have to be frank and admit that I do not think I would have sought it out were it not for the need to cover it here. The songs can be streamed from the club's internet site and a sampling would be a good idea before purchase.

I'd like to be able to tell of more issues - but they would be entirely imaginary, and even the never ending numbers of rip off compilations of the top 50 or so hits seems to be drying up.

DVD and BLU-RAY

I have received information relating to two massive issues of DVDs from **Time Life**, both of which could be of interest to those with adequately deep pockets.

One covers **The Carol Burnett Show**, in two versions - "The Carol Burnett Show - The Lost Episodes" - 21 episodes on 10 DVDs at a stated price of $99:95, the other also named "The Carol Burnett Show - The Lost Episodes" but with the extra words "Ultimate Collection" of 45 episodes on 22 DVDs at $199:90. In total there were many more Carol Burnett shows. One specifically listed with Bing on both sets is of 3 November 1971. The show was originally scheduled to be shown on that date but it was not. The date of transmission was in fact 15 March 1972. Bing is shown as singing "Love Thy Neighbor/Put a Little Love in Your Heart" and participating in "As the Stomach Turns" and "Sing/Get Happy" with Carol and others. Bing appeared in other shows with Carol Burnett but they are not listed in the present set. The Time Life listing on their site is at http://timelife.com/categories/carol-burnett. Carol Burnett fans might like to check this out. Amazon (US) is also listing one and six DVD versions with the same titles and illustrated covers. Scope for confusion!

Bing attempts to persuade Bob to leave his Palm Springs home in the Bob Hope Show of December 15, 1965.

The second set is of **Bob Hope Specials**, titled "Thanks for the Memories", and billed as *"23 Bob Hope Specials including 11 that have not been seen since their original broadcast - - - the most complete collection of Bob Hope specials ever assembled"*. The stated price is $99:95.
(There is a second version of the set with the same name but with the addition of ten Ed Sullivan Shows at a stated price of $179:90).

In both sets there are at least four segments featuring Bing and these are the Bob Hope shows of December 15, 1965, October 24, 1975, "The Hilarious Unrehearsed Antics of the Stars" (shown in 1984) and "Shanks for the Memory" (1994). Also, Phil Crosby is seen in *The Bob Hope Christmas Special* aired on January 18, 1968.

More details can be seen at the Time Life site http://timelife.com/products/bobhope

The Internet

Because of the paucity of new issues I have been spending time attempting to explore the further reaches of the internet in order to establish what might be available as downloads or for streaming that might just possibly be of interest. I wish I had not done so as the activity carries dangers. Thorough searches produce superficially enticing material with phrases that include the words "rare" "unissued" "unusual" and similar "come-ons". All that I found were misleading and two resulted in downloads of malicious software, from one of which I was saved only by my excellent firewall and virus checking software, but even that was not enough to save me on the other, and I had to resort to special avoidance action. Beware of sites, particularly from the Far East and Eastern Europe that appear to offer the unusual, though problems are not confined to those areas.

The following is therefore unlikely to be new to those well versed in the use of the internet but I hope might be of help to those who have suitable equipment but have lacked the courage or information to make use of what is out there.

Almost all will be familiar with **iTunes** http://www.apple.com/itunes/

Download their player and you can then download or stream music from their vast store. Downloads must be

paid for, and streaming is subject to subscription. There is usually a three month free introductory offer. A wide range of music is stocked but some items have been known to vanish unpredictably. All services here require payment.

Amazon operates in many territories but the offers appear to be similar. There are many downloads available, and many are of items not available on physical CDs. Those who buy physical CDs get the right to download the MP3 equivalent - a service that remains open apparently indefinitely - I have downloaded all my past purchases twice, the second time after a computer failure when I had lost many tracks. I find that a download is much quicker and easier than "ripping" from the CD. As with most other providers, tracks can be downloaded individually or as albums.

Spotify, originating in Sweden, now operates very widely and has a vast store of music including a lot of Crosby, (I would think more than iTunes) including most of the issues from Bing Crosby Enterprises of the last few years. You have the option of paying a subscription for unlimited streaming rights, or by accepting inserted adverts every few tracks, you get it free. The subscription in the UK is £9:99 per month, and (surprisingly) appears to be $9:99 in the US, an odd conversion rate. The paid-for streaming is in higher quality than the "free" advertising laden channel but you need good bandwidth to take advantage of it, and would not notice the difference unless you are using fairly good equipment. The option exists to buy downloaded tracks or albums as downloads.

There are other services that operate on local levels which have similar operational methods but the few I have examined do not have the same musical range as those mentioned and some off niche products. Many businesses selling CDs also offer download options.

Almost invariably the drawback of downloads is that you get, at best, a copy of the front cover graphic and no notes (the exceptions are a number of mainly classical labels which supply pdf files replicating all the artwork, but that does not apply to us).

On the radio/video front **Bing Crosby Enterprises** have a number of audio and video streams on their site. At http://bingcrosby.com/audio-vault they currently have ten KMH shows, 11 Philcos, and 22 Chesterfields, as well as the 14 episodes of "The Crosby Years". All are in good audio quality but I have experienced a number of glitches on this site.

The same site in the video section http://bingcrosby.com/video-vault there are some video clips from the TV shows though most are of short excerpts only. Some items have restricted regional access.

The **Internet Archive** site https://archive.org/details/otr_crosby has upwards of 200 radio shows to stream, of both the short 1950s fifteen minute and the earlier half hour shows. Some are only identified by the names of the principal guests and some not at all, and the audio quality is not too good. The same group also has further interest - at https://archive.org/details/OTRR_BCRC_Singles there is a long sequence of the Bing – Rosemary Clooney shows.

A wider search on the parent site https://archive.org/ can also be rewarding.

The **Old Time Radio Archive** has a number of radio shows http://www.otr.net/?p=bing but again the audio quality is a little limited.

Youtube https://www.youtube.com/ is, I am sure, known to all. What might not be familiar is that there is much purely audio content (or to be accurate, audio accompanied by such things as static images or even records playing on a turntable). Almost all the Crosby "V" discs are there accompanied by images of the labels (search on vdiscdaddy) and there are also a number of films and TV shows. (Until recently there were many of the Hollywood Palace shows but I see they have been removed, presumably for copyright reasons). Some items carry regional restrictions.

Finally several sections of **Old Time Radio Catalog** offer MP3 CDs or audio CDs of various sequences of radio shows. https://www.otrcat.com/p/bing-crosby (assorted KMH, Mail Call and other shows, three MP3 CDs or 130 audio CDs)

https://www.otrcat.com/p/philco-radio-time-with-bing-crosby (2 MP3 CDs or 40 audio CDs)

https://www.otrcat.com/p/bing-crosby-chesterfield-show (3 MP3 CDs or 56 audio CDs)

https://www.otrcat.com/p/bing-crosby-and-rosemary-clooney-show (4 MP3 CDs or 73 audio CDs)

These are in compressed 64kbps digital form on MP3 CDs or much larger collections of audio CDs. Not exactly High Fidelity but adequate until something better comes along.

The MP3 format is now rather old and can be very compressed with adverse effect on sound quality. Many classical music downloads are now offered in uncompressed formats such as FLAC, but I have found no Crosby material offered in this form. Full range stereo recordings would benefit from the improvement.

I do not imagine any of this will be new to those accustomed to browsing the internet but I hope that it might help or encourage others. Do take care however with any site with which you are unfamiliar.

Richard Baker **bakerstonb@gmail.com**

Bing Crosby

December 30, 1976

Dear Eugenie:

Well it was a great surprise to hear from you - and to know that you were at the concert when we were in New York working at the Uris Theatre.

I would have loved to have seen you and said hello, but I guess opening night was a little hectic getting backstage and Cork probably didn't want to get involved - and I don't blame him!

It was fun working in New York. Business wasn't as good as I thought it would be, although the final week was pretty good. But the audiences were universally responsive, warm and most kind.

And the children enjoyed themselves immensely, as did Kathryn and I.

Sadly enough, Rosie Clooney had throat trouble almost from the day before the concert, when we played the Avery Fisher Hall and it held over all through the two week engagement.

It was too bad in New York that she wasn't in peak form, because in Europe and all the other concerts she had absolutely been perfect.

When Bushkin, Hinton and Johnny Smith play, you just have to do your best.

Appreciate your kind comments, Eugenie. The next time

I'm in New York we will have to have a cup of tea or something. I'll get hold of you through Cork.

Give him my best, too - and warmest best wishes to you for a nice holiday season -

As ever,

Bing

Bing Crosby

BC:lm

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